

## **BIOGRAPHICAL SUMMARY: Earlene Piko**

Earlene Piko, the only child of Earl and Sebra Thagard Harmon, was born in Encino, California on September 3, 1931 and raised in Westwood.

Piko earned a bachelor's degree in microbiology and nursing from UCLA. She also earned a master's degree and completed work towards a doctorate in educational psychology.

Separated from her husband, Bill Chambers, she arrived in Hawai'i in 1952 with her two children. She eventually found employment with the school of nursing at Queen's Hospital and later, the Kindergarten Children's Aid Society. She subsequently spent a few years as a teacher/psychologist in the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands.

Between 1963 and 1979, Piko developed and implemented innovative youth programs at Pālama Settlement. She was responsible for the Pākōlea Program which used sports and other activities as incentives for learning. She was also responsible for the in-community treatment of youthful offenders program. During her years at Pālama she lived at the settlement.

Between 1979 and 1988 Piko was employed at Hawai'i Job Corps. She then joined the staff of the Wai'anae Mental Health Center.

Retired since 1993, Piko and her husband, Joe, now reside in Las Vegas.

Tape No. 27-15-1-97

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

with

Earlene Piko (EP)

Honolulu, O'ahu

April 3, 1997

BY: Michi Kodama-Nishimoto (MK)

MK: This is an interview with Mrs. Earlene Piko at her home in Honolulu, O'ahu, and the interviewer is Michiko Kodama-Nishimoto, and the date is April 3, 1997.

Okay. I guess we'll start today's interview with the beginning of your life. Maybe you can start by telling me when and where you were born.

EP: I was born in Los Angeles, actually in Encino, in September 3, 1931. That's it.

MK: What number child were you in your family?

EP: I was it. An only child.

MK: What were your mother's name and your father's name?

EP: My mother's name was Sebra Thagard Harmon, and my father's name was Earl Harmon.

MK: And based on what you've heard about your family background, share with me what you know about your mother's family, and her background.

EP: Oh. My mother's family came from the South. They were property owners, the family name was Morgan in Mississippi. And after the Civil War, things were really bad for them. My grandmother's father, my great-grandfather, was cut loose kind of, at the end of the Civil War, and was one of those people that went to the territory. He married a Cherokee half-breed girl, and they had (three) children, my grandmother them, living in a half dugout (with) sod on top. And he collected buffalo bones and stuff for a living. They were adamantly---well, he was really very strange. He was kind of wild. In fact, he committed suicide trying to keep my grandmother from marrying my grandfather. Because his wife died in childbirth while he was gone on one of these pick-up-buffalo-bones ventures. And he came back, and my grandmother was, I think, about seven or eight years old, and there was a little boy, and the baby that was born. And she was living alone. The wife had died in childbirth, and the new baby was in the hands of my grandmother who was about seven or eight years old.

Well, evidently, Grandpa went cuckoo and decided that he would never let his daughters marry, right, 'cause then they would die. But down the road, of course, she decided she

wanted to. And it was sad because he didn't want her to go to school. He just wanted to keep them home, and it's one of those prairie stories.

My grandmother did marry but he [grandfather] was shot at the time, and a bullet lodged near my grandfather's heart, and so he was always sickly. He was in medical school, and he had to leave medical school and took a job as a county clerk in Texas. But then he died when my mother was—my mother was twelve years old when he died. And my grandmother took over his job which was very unusual because you didn't have women in government. But [she did] because she had the children and I guess had such a good reputation. So then my mother grew up caring for her siblings, but then she was a wild redhead who liked to ride horses to dry her hair. She would wet her hair and then dry it. She went to TCU [Texas Christian University] on a scholarship in drama. And she was quite a lady, I guess. (Chuckles)

And my father, she met at TCU, where he was a football hero (chuckles) but at the end of World War I, right. So then they married, and things weren't good. The depression came. Anyway, they went to California, and that's where I came from. (Chuckles) And so that's my parents.

MK: And what do you know about your dad's family's background?

EP: Oh, my dad's family. His mother came from Germany. They came over on the traditional boat when she was seventeen. And she married her husband. In fact, I've got the trunk upstairs. They gave 'em a trunk full of I don't know what, and bought them tickets to the United States, and they came. So they landed in New York, didn't speak any English, didn't have relatives. My grandfather went to work in the slaughterhouse, and my grandmother, for a while, worked in one of those sewing sweatshops. They saved enough money to buy a wagon, a covered wagon, and they set out going West because there's free land, right? And so they did.

And my grandmother had ten children in [twenty] years, in the covered wagon. My father was the youngest of the lot, and he had an older brother, twenty years and two days difference in their birthdays.

MK: Oh my goodness.

EP: And she never had a doctor. And what I remember—I adored that grandmother—when I was little, she used to wear funny clothes. (Chuckles) But she got very angry when she was eighty, that they called the doctor when she got pneumonia because she had never had a doctor in her life. And she never lost a child either. She was sturdy, square, stocky German lady. My grandfather didn't do so well. He got worked to death by the time he was forty, forty-two. And he died. But she had grown kids. Like my father had nieces and nephews older than him. So they worked, so that's how they came about.

So German stock with the immigrant kind of thing. And my mother's with the more—they had come from this educated kind of upper class, where they owned the plantation. And so, on this side there was kind of more academia, and on this [other] side were very more earthy people, yeah. And it was in the whole family that way.

MK: After your mom and dad met at TCU, and eventually got married and had you, at that time,

when you were very young, what were your mom and dad doing?

EP: My father was working at the Farmer's National Bank in Los Angeles, which is now down in what they call Little Tokyo, was a major banking establishment before World War II. And my mother was teaching and pursuing—well, she wanted to pursue her career, really. She did not want to have a child. Oh, she did not want to have a child. They used what contraception they had, which was no good, obviously. But they didn't have the option of abortion or anything. Because if they had, I wouldn't be here. Because I was not wanted. My mother did not want me.

My mother was a very beautiful lady. Very opposite from me. She had this gorgeous figure that wouldn't stop, red hair, gorgeous legs, totally, you know. Bosoms, everything. And here I came along and I was, I think, copied after my paternal grandmother. I was stocky and square and looked more like a tackle on the Notre Dame [football] line, than a ballet dancer. But, because of my mother's wishes, I was given every kind of dance there was in the world, because I was going to be graceful if it killed her. When I was four years old I'm in gymnastics class having my butt kicked, too, so I knew about that. But ballet, tap, acrobat, any kind to make me more gracious.

Because actually, my mother was way ahead of her time. In those days, to say you didn't want to be a mother was not a popular position. And she said it. That's why I was put in boarding school. I used to think that was terrible. But the nuns were real nice. The nuns were nice to me. Only a couple of crazy ones, but lot of really emotion that was there. If I had just stayed at home, the only thing I had, I had an aunt, my mother's younger sister, whom I adored (and still do, she's still alive. I would go every vacation, every holiday and everything, I went to live with Deda and Claudie. If I hadn't I think I really would have been (alone)—because my mother didn't like me. She didn't want me. I stopped her from being what she wanted to be, I know that. Never did work out. Never did.

MK: So your childhood was spent mostly in boarding school, then.

EP: Mm hmm [yes]. And with my aunt and uncle.

MK: And looking back on your boarding school experience, what do you remember most about it?

EP: Well, see, Marymount at that time, was a school for girls and it was operated by the Madames of the Sacred Heart. Well, the Sisters of the Sacred Heart did all of the chore work, housework, cleaning, cooking, all that kind, and the Madames did the teaching. Well, there was this one, Sister Mary Perpetua, who ran the kitchen. I remember her. She had this wonderful laugh, real soft. She'd always hold me in her lap and fix me extra desserts because I was the youngest one there. She even let me keep a kitten in the kitchen and we weren't supposed to have any pets. I had a lot of good feelings.

Educationally it was wonderful because at that time, it was growing under what they called an opportunity school. In other words, there were no grades, and you just went in as fast and as far as you could wherever you would. So I had wonderful education. Had music from four-years-old time, the piano lessons. Seventeen years of piano lessons and organ lessons and harp. And everything nice. It wasn't bad. My aunt and uncle were my wonders. Everybody should have had an aunt and uncle like that. They would totally spoil me, gave me whatever I



wanted. Loved me a lot, still loves me a lot, my aunt. Just got a letter from her the other day. She's ninety-two.

MK: So looking at your situation where you were sent to a boarding school from the time you were very little, obviously this cost a lot of money . . .

EP: Oh yeah.

MK: And so in terms of your socioeconomic situation, how would you describe it?

EP: Upper middle class. Money was never---I never even thought about money, and I never thought people didn't have money. I also never knew there were any people that didn't have blue eyes and blonde hair, because I never lived where they were. I never even knew it existed. One time something happened to me when I was, gee, I don't know, six or seven years old. I was home with my mother and father over some vacation before they took me to Deda's. Anyway, we were living on North Vermont Street---this is a horrible part of town now, but it wasn't then. And I wandered out looking for something to do, and I guess some kid to play with, right. And there was a little Japanese girl that I bumped into, and her name was Tako. I didn't know what that meant at the time, and that probably wasn't her name. It was probably her nickname. But anyway, her parents owned a store on the corner. I went down to the store with her and was playing.

My mother couldn't find me, she came and got me, or she found me and she took me home, and she gave me a spanking with a switch on my legs. She switched me 'cause I couldn't play with Tako. And I said, "But why couldn't I play with Tako?" My mother always told me I couldn't sit on the ground or anything when I was home. I had to sit in a chair, because nice little girls have clean panties, right? Okay. Nice little girls have clean panties. And so I said to my mother---and this I remember out of my own self, "But Mother, Tako has clean panties." She told me I couldn't play with her. I didn't understand that until a lot later. But it didn't make any sense to me at all why I got spanked for playing with Tako.

And the funny part is, to this day I can remember the smell of that store. You know, the dried fish smell, and I guess it's---I don't know what it is. A sweet smell, what is that sweet smell? Miso, maybe. That smell, you walk in and you can smell it. So that was the only thing.

At school everybody was as Caucasian as you get. The only thing that was interesting is my parents were wildly Protestant. So I hated Catholics with a passion. But nobody but a Catholic school would take a kid that young, okay. So here I was in this environment. I grew up aware of all of the bad stuff. I learned some awful stuff. In fact, I told my mother before she died, every vulgar word I ever learned in my life. And I learned a few. I learned from her, the worst. And common language: nigger, spic, greaser, kike, wop, pollack, any kind, awful names. Jap, slant-eye, awful stuff. Even at the time---and I didn't even know it---those words made me sick. That was basically later in school when I finally felt strong enough to take my own life away. I wanted to get away from the values that were values in Encino, Westwood. That's why I wanted to get away.

It was nothing learned, I think it was things unlearned. And then became aware that I was only seeing myself in the mirror. I didn't know anything about anything.

MK: How about in school at Marymount? What sorts of values did you gain from there?

EP: Learn, learn, learn, learn, learn. Loyalty. I think that's why I always remember Sister Mary Perpetua. She was always there, no matter what. I think just learning, being the best you can. Taking care of yourself, being proud of yourself, a lot of values.

MK: How many years did you go to Marymount?

EP: Until I graduated. And then I went across the street to UCLA [University of California at Los Angeles] and just moved house. (Chuckles)

MK: And when you went to UCLA, what did you major in?

EP: Microbiology and nursing. At that time, Ben Casey and Dr. Kildare and stuff were real good (laughs) and I decided doctors were cute and I wanted to have me one.

(Laughter)

EP: That's the truth. Microbiology minor. Well, I finished. I didn't like it by the time I finished, but I liked it in a way. I knew one thing from the nursing was that I liked being with people. The microbiology was interesting, and I liked it, but it was too calm, yeah. I knew I liked working with people.

MK: And what is it about nursing that you didn't like?

EP: (Laughs) The hard work.

(Laughter)

EP: It's backbreaking. In those days, it was even more backbreaking. It has changed mightily, what I hear, at least. In those days, nurses were handmaidens to doctors, and it didn't matter what they told you to do or how they told you to do it or what they did. You had to say yes and do it. Even when it came to doing things you knew really weren't the right things to do. You got to do it anyway. I didn't enjoy being treated like a dog. Particularly as a probie [someone on probation] you are treated like a dog. You have to do terrible things, and you don't have any rest. I remember going two and three days with only one and two hours of sleep a night. That was absolutely legal in those days. I didn't like that. Maybe that's part of what Marymount taught me. I was far too egocentric to be treated like that. I had never been treated like that, okay.

One thing I did get from my background was a real sense of personal respect. No matter what, with the weird family background I had, nobody disavowed me as a person. Just because my mother didn't love me the way I wanted to be loved, she never disavowed me as a human being. She never treated me or talked to me like I was less than her. In fact, maybe they all said I was too much. I suppose, to me getting too much. You're supposed to be always up there, right.

The first big activity in California was going on at UCLA campus. I attended all of the meetings. And I signed the Stockholm Peace Treaty which I'll never forget, because I got

called up before the California Department of Education, you know, when they were witch hunting for Communists. Mm hmm. 'Cause I had signed the Stockholm Peace Treaty. Stockholm Peace Treaty was right after World War II, but it was a campus thing saying, "We the students of the world want peace." Now, what's wrong with that, right? Well, of course, [Senator Joseph] McCarthy and his boys said this was all attached to this nefarious plot of these Communists who were gonna do all this bad stuff, right? I never give it another thought. I wasn't into communism at the time, I was into learning about people. I was horrified at the Black situation, and I was horrified having come out of the family and heard the things I heard. I think like a lot of Whites, you get maybe over-guilty. Like, feeling guilty for something you didn't do, so you want to make up for it. I became very, very interested in the Civil Rights movement. I think what really, really got to me was this sense of wrongdoing. Maybe even going back as far as Tako and the panties. There was a sense of somebody treating somebody wrong. So that's what happened at UCLA.

MK: I know that you did get your degree in nursing.

EP: Oh yeah.

MK: You didn't like nursing so you didn't pursue that as a profession, but while you were still going to school for your nursing degree, you got married.

EP: Uh huh [yes].

MK: Now, whom did you marry and how did that work out?

EP: Most of the girls were eighteen, nineteen, twenty that I was in the dorm with. And everybody was getting married. Everybody was---that was the thing to do, to get married. So I met an aspiring would-be doctor who wasn't a doctor yet, and we went on a weekend, went to Flagstaff, Arizona and got married. That was how I got married [to John William Chambers].

MK: And then shortly thereafter you became . . .

EP: I was immediately pregnant.

MK: . . . pregnant.

EP: I think he threw his hat on the bed and I got pregnant. (MK chuckles.) And so that didn't distress me, and I was at school, so that was cool. In fact, it was kind of good because for the first time, I had the ability to live someplace without my parents paying for it. Because an allotment—the Korean War was happening and running around, you know.

MK: Your husband was a doctor-to-be, you were a student, you had Bill [Chambers, EP's son]. Now, how did you manage all that?

EP: Well, that was easy because I had a navy allotment. That was really nice because it paid for a house and there was enough left over that I could hire a nice—you'd call her a baby-sitter, a nanny, Mrs. Reeves. She was just a lady who lived next door who took care of Bill, until Bill was—how old was Bill when I put him in pre-school? Not quite two years old.

MK: So you were able to manage that. And I know that you mentioned that during the wartime, there was a teacher shortage. Now, what happened to you then?

EP: Well, see, after World War II, that was while I was at UCLA, okay. It was a terrible teacher shortage in California, so they issued the word that anyone who had graduated from one of any of the state schools with a bachelor's degree and would agree to sign a statement saying you'll take twenty-four units in education, they would grant provisional credentials to you. In the meantime, I had a—not really an aunt, a calabash aunt, a friend of my mother's—who was a principal at Van Nuys High School. She's the one who said, "You should teach, and you should teach kindergarten because they're on half-day sessions, and there's only two hours and twenty minutes of actual (chuckles) school time involved, but the pay's the same as for all day." So that's what I did. I signed up and I went in.

The first school that I taught in was called Sunland. Roscoe was in the boonies of San Fernando Valley, it's out where all of the old broken-down trailer parks and stuff were. And the interesting part, though, all of the people that lived in one trailer park were [Japanese American] people who were [interned] at Manzanar [during World War II]. They were trying to re-establish. So I walked into this classroom—they gave me a curriculum guide and introduced me to the other teachers. I walked in and there were these thirty little faces looking at me, and I didn't know what to do with them, that was for sure!

(Laughter)

EP: I had never taught anybody anything. The first two days were havoc. Absolutely havoc. Those kids were hanging from the chandeliers. The lady next door was Mrs. Oliver Rafferty, I'll never forget her. She'd been teaching second grade for like thirty years. She had this hair that was wound around, and you put a pencil in it. Really. And she wore this kind of underwear that come down long and you pull your stockings over 'em and they're longer. So she was quite a character. But anyway, she called me outside, and she said, "My dear, I can't stand that noise in there. I can't teach."

(Laughter)

EP: "Things have got to change." And she says, "There's thirty of them and there's one of you. There's got to be one boss. Now, it's either gonna be you or it'll be them. And you're gonna leave 'cause I'll see you fired. You're going."

So, "What do I do?"

She says, "Well, who's the leader?"

"Little Japanese boy whose name was Carl." Little shogun, real stoic face, little dude. Anyway, "That's the one."

She says, "Okay, get him. You bring him in and you make him do everything. Give him every privilege there is in the room. Anoint him king. Give him the responsibility of telling the kids to line up. Give him the responsibility of saying, 'Come in'. Give him the responsibility, 'Carl, see that the kids get their sweaters.'"

I said, "Well, what if they don't?"

She said, "Well, you know where the facial nerves are?"

I said, "Yeah."

She says, "Well, you put your fingers on the facial nerves and you press hard. It will not leave a bruise . . ."

(Laughter)

EP: "... and guarantee they'll stop in their tracks."

She told me that. I did that. It works.

(Laughter)

EP: Carl worked. I had organization. (MK laughs.) I learned the first thing about being a teacher. You got to be the boss.

MK: What an introduction to teaching.

EP: Yeah, it was but it was terrible. I just can't think that a department of education—and I know they still do it—would turn green-grass rookie with not even a—I didn't even have the right educational background. With thirty kids looking at you to do something, right? There it was.

MK: How long did you last?

EP: Oh, I lasted. I lasted. (MK laughs.) In fact, I liked it. How long did I last? Was it two years, three years? Three years or four, I mean, I lasted until I was ready to—almost the year before I came over here. So around two years.

MK: And you just said that you liked it. What did you like about it?

EP: Oh, the kids. They were adorably wonderful. Just great. And the things that you could do. There was this lady, I forget her name. She was the guru of all the elementary school teaching at that time. She was from Columbia University. She operated a project called the Little Red Schoolhouse. It's still famous. I took classes from her, 'cause then I decided on my own, ey, I better learn something about this business. And since I was still going to school anyway, stuck in a couple of education [courses]—I had to take my twenty-four [units], right. So I got the things I liked. She was one of these participatory teachers where don't ever do it all, you do with. Okay, how to grow a garden, how to have the kids pick the vegetables, how to cook the vegetables, how to teach arithmetic and reading readiness by making recipes and making cocoa, all this good stuff. I watched her do it with her class, and it was perfect. There wasn't anything at all. I went back and I tried what she did, and it didn't go so good.

(Laughter)

EP: But it went kind of good, but just not good. And then it became obvious to me, you got to



learn better. And so I did. But I took that path, and I did those things and it was just great fun. They said you have to teach life science by having live animals in the room. And they suggested that reproduction, that's the place where you can start talking. Okay, that's good. So I got a rabbit and made sure that it was pregnant rabbit. And the kids taking care of the rabbit, and that was really great. The rabbit gave birth in the middle of class, and I didn't know that rabbits ate their babies. They do. The kids were yelling and screaming, "Eee! Mrs. Bunny is eating something, I think it's a baby!" Another one of my teaching projects not gone well.

(Laughter)

EP: So I taught 'em that, "Beware of your parents, they'll probably eat you up!"

(Laughter)

EP: But I liked it. No, it was great. We learned together. The kids were just unbelievable. I got the kids into writing poetry, 'cause I like poetry. They would say it and I would write it down. We published it. It's in a little booklet called *Wings*. The Department of Education published it. I guess it's still available. But the things you can do with kids, you know.

MK: I know that you were taking credits, you were trying to get your twenty-four credits, and at that point, was it then that you decided to go towards a master's in ed psych [educational psychology]?

EP: Well, that was—no, the ed[ucation] one. I took my first master's in state education. Those twenty-four units made it possible for me to get the master's in education. But by then I liked it. I wasn't taking it to keep a job, I liked what I was learning. I really liked what I was learning. But then it was obvious to me that I didn't just like helping that skill develop, I was really more interested in how come the skill can develop. How do people learn? Why do people learn? Why do some people learn? And the guy next to 'em doesn't? What are things that are conducive to creating successful students, total, behaviorwise and everything? And then it became obvious that that's where it lapped over into the psych[ology]. But I didn't like clinical psych[ology]. So the obvious place was ed psych[ology]. And then I liked that.

MK: So you got a master's in ed psych?

EP: Ed psych, mm hmm.

MK: After you got the master's what did you pursue?

EP: Going to school. More ed psych. Staying put, (chuckles) doing the same thing. Pursuing a doctorate. Finished the required academic work, didn't finish the dissertation.

MK: What was your dissertation going towards?

EP: Juvenile delinquency among girls, causes of. I used a control group at Marymount, and the target group was at juvenile hall in Los Angeles. My great idea was to find what was different between the girls who were at Marymount from the girls who were in juvenile hall. So I tried, and I tried to get matched students. But what I found out was, nothing was really different. There was no one significant thing—there was one significant thing, but it wasn't one of the

variables I had, like divorce, religion, race, economics, any kind. Not one was statistically important enough to be a positive variable. The one thing that was—and I didn't notice this until later—was a significant human being was a difference. In the girls who were at Marymount who had all of the negative stuff, they were Black or brown or poor, or their mother was a prostitute or whatever. Nobody had any education in their family, the whole thing. If you listen long enough in their stories and went back to reread the histories, really, every one of them had had an encounter with a significant human being. Sometimes it was only a casual encounter. One I'll never forget was at a bus stop. It was significantly the thing that made the girl look another direction. Just a conversation with a woman. And never knew who the woman was. She didn't know who the woman was, either. But if I look back, every one of them had human connection that made the difference. I didn't look at that until I had thrown the stuff out the door. I had let it [dissertation] lapse. I brought all my stuff here in a cardboard box. I got an extension but I never did it. And that fit in to where my head was in the first place. People are the thing that can help other people if they want to share, and if they don't want to dominate. Maybe that's why the settlement issue appealed to me when I found out what it was, too. [It] was the idea that you weren't supposedly telling those people how they had to be. Enough of that.

MK: So, let's see. Should we end here? Or should we . . .

EP: Okay.

MK: Should we end here?

EP: Yeah, let's go feed you.

MK: Okay, we'll just end it here.

END OF INTERVIEW

Tape No. 27-17-2-97

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

with

Earlene Piko (EP)

Honolulu, Hawai'i

April 10, 1997

BY: Michi Kodama-Nishimoto (MK)

MK: This is an interview with Mrs. Earlene Piko at her home in Honolulu, O'ahu on April 10, 1997. The interviewer is Michiko Kodama-Nishimoto.

Okay, this is a continuation of the previous interview. And when we ended the interview, you had been in a Ph.D. program, and you had gotten divorced, and I think we're going to continue with the divorce and on to your coming to Hawai'i.

EP: I got divorced in Hawai'i. I left my husband, but I didn't get the divorce until 1956. And I filed for divorce here and got it.

MK: And what caused you to leave California and come to Hawai'i?

EP: I told you, I became aware that I didn't like who I was or how I was living. It was the values—I know this sounds strange, but it was true. I was on a fast track of expectations of my parents. I was doing all the things that you're supposed to do, and I was living and socializing with people who were doing what they were supposed to. They were all climbing the big ladder to success. Success was interpreted by your Dun and Bradstreet, the color of your skin, the car you drove, even. I mean, you know, really superficial. San Fernando Valley—I don't know if it still is—but it was the height of vacuous living. If you go to a party or anything and listen to the conversations, it was really nothing I wanted. I guess I became aware that, like I told you, I felt like an egg, yeah? I felt like, "Who are you? You do what you're told. You say you're this, you say you're that. Why are you that? You don't know. Somebody told you you are." It's practically what church you go to or whatever. Why do you go? Because somebody told you to.

And I felt really pressured in the fact that, again, my mother felt that I was not a very nice person by this time, and that my husband was off in Korea fighting wars and doing all this good stuff, right? And when he came home, I wanted a divorce right then. I didn't want to have another baby. I didn't want anything, 'cause I didn't know him. He's a nice person, but nothing. So it was that pressure to conform to what society says are proper rules, right? I decided now I'm able. I'm going to get up and I'm going to get away from all of this. If I wreck my life and if I'm truly this worthless harlot, then so be it. But I'll find out first.

So I thought, "Well, where will I go?" I had a very good friend who married a doctor who

was on the staff at Guadalajara University. And I had been down there several times. She had gone down there to live. So I decided—I love Mexico, so I thought I'll go to Mexico. I'll go to Guadalajara. Manuel [EP's friend's husband] can get me a job, and we'll be down there. Then I got to thinking, wait a minute, if I go to Mexico, then I'll be in a foreign country. I don't speak Spanish that well—only pidgin Spanish. I've seen the jail, I've seen their hospitals. I don't think I want to give up American citizenship, okay? I don't want to give up the protection of the American flag. And I was double thinking Mexico.

Then I thought, where else is furthest I can get (laughs) and still be in the United States? Well, at that time, Hawai'i was a territory. It wasn't [a state] in the United States. But it was protected by them, "So that's where I'll go. I'll go to Hawai'i." I bought a George Kainapau record that I played till it was absolutely in shreds. When I found out he was a man—it was all falsetto. I thought it was a woman (laughs) until I found out it was a man. But anyway, so that was how I picked Hawai'i, because it was the furthest (laugh) I could get away and still be in the United States.

MK: Now what did you know about Hawai'i before you came? What was your impression of the place you were going to go to?

EP: Pearl Harbor, big Navy base, battleships, December 7, George Kainapau, beautiful music. I'm not sure about grass shacks, but maybe.

(Laughter)

EP: I had no idea. I had no idea. No idea at all. That was it.

MK: And when you came to Hawai'i, what happened to you?

EP: (Laughs) Well, on the plane over, number one, I wore a navy-blue knit suit. That should tell you something.

(Laughter)

EP: And we arrived in late June. And I made Bill wear flannel, (those) grey flannel pants that he hated anyway. But by that time they're scratchy as. . . . Well, anyway, everything and everybody. And [we] landed at the airport. Oh, we brought a cat. I love animals. So I had bought this Russian blue kitten before I left, and I had paid, I don't know, couple of hundred dollars. It was an awful lot of money at that time. But I was going to use him for stud and gonna make money, right, okay? Well, I don't know if you know about Russian blues, but they have particularly dense fur, because they come from Russia. So they have like double-thick coats, and they have big bones. They're a big cat. But they have a little teeny heart.

Well, I didn't know about [Hawai'i's 120-day] quarantine [law]. I had the kitten inoculated with tiny kitten doses—it had so many certificates of health hanging on it. At the airport, certificates be damned. They took the cat, and off to jail he went for 120 days. But we didn't know that was going to happen. And the kid's screaming and crying, right? "Why does Gentleman Jim have to go to jail?" (Laughs)

But anyway, off with Gentleman Jim to quarantine, where he either died of a heart attack

'cause they didn't have enough room in the cat house and they put him in a kennel that was close to where dogs were, and they bark, bark, bark, bark. And the heat—it was ninety degrees, and here he is in this thick fur and his teeny heart, heart attack. So that was the first thing.

Didn't have a house, so I decided, well, since we don't know where this is and we don't know what's happening, was there a hotel in town? I didn't want to go to the tourist parts. And they said the Alexander Young [Hotel], so I had made reservations at the Alexander Young. We got out of the taxi and went to the Alexander Young. It was a really nice taxi driver that drove us in, and his name was Elipio, Filipino man. I remembered his name. He told me that the taxi stand was on Bishop Street, right up from the hotel, and if we needed anything, call him back, right? And so I did, incidently, and he's the one who took us on our house hunting that found the house that we rented. (Laughs) He was a really nice man.

But we went into the Alexander Young. We had this huge room, old-fashioned. Ceiling, high, high, high, high, high. You know.

MK: Ceiling fans.

EP: Yeah. I was going to say Sadie Thompson kind of fans. And a bathtub with claw feet, a big, huge bathtub with lions' feet around the ball, yeah. It was really different, okay. But it was different in a nice way. So then we got there, first thing that happened, of course, was that the kid's hungry. Naturally, they're always hungry. (Chuckles) So we took a bath, decided those wool clothes were a little warm, (laughs) and went downstairs. (Laughs) Excuse me.

At that time, they had a formal dining room. It was called the Hob Nob. I walked in, and in the center of the dining room, had all like lemon-colored damask tablecloths, and the tables were all far apart. I mean, you weren't on top of each other. In the middle was a big flower arrangement of white spider mums. Gorgeous. Over against the wall was a remote radio broadcast going on with a fat guy, Lucky Luck. So we went in. In there, we met a tremendous *wahine* whose name was Tiny. I don't know what her last name is—I never did know. But she was a waitress. She took to us, and we took to her. So she was really, really good with the kids. She was a Hawaiian girl—woman, she was no girl. But she was older than me, but. Anyway, so we had nothing but good memories of. . . .

So after a week I decided, well, when you live someplace, you don't ever go to the tourist places. So we should go and see some tourist things before we settle in. Because after all, (chuckles) I got no problem. (Laughs) You know, I still had money. So we did. Went out to the [U.S.S.] *Arizona*, went down to Waikīkī, went up to the [Nu'uanu] Pali, went to the palace ['Iolani Palace], which was then housing the territorial legislature. Did tourist things.

So then it became obvious to me that after about a week or so that—oh, we went to the pineapple factory, the cannery [Dole Cannery]. And then I'd better look for a house. So I walked down and got Elipio to take us in his taxi, and I had the newspaper. I looked at rentals. So I saw this one, and it was on Kākela Place. He said, "Oh, I think that's nice. I think you would like that." So we drove, and I'll never forget going up Mānoa, the poinciana trees were blooming, and the plumeria trees are always blooming. And going up there was beautiful beyond words, because it was just like a flowerpot. It was all green and brilliant trees, I mean gorgeous. Only funny thing—rain coming on one side of the street, no rain on



the other side of the street.

(Laughter)

EP: We couldn't figure that out. So the first place we went to look was at Kākela. And the big house, and then it was downstairs, they had built an apartment for their son while he was in residence at Queen's Hospital, two bedrooms, living room with a fireplace, 'cause it was from upstairs, and a kitchen. And one, two, three, four doors outside. And in the back—it was up on a hill, yeah? So it was all grass and plumeria trees and things. Then their daughter, Nancy Hedemann, lived in a house down on the same property. The house was a copy—it is still, I guess. I haven't been by in a long time—a copy of Shakespeare's home on Stratford on Avon. It had a thatch roof when we moved in, even. Turf roof, yeah? Not thatched, turf. Sod, I think they call it. Whatever they call it, anyway.

So the people who owned it were George and Dean Oakley. Dean Oakley was a teacher at Punahou [School] who taught Latin and English for ninety-nine thousand years. George was a would-be poet-actor who was a reporter and linotype operator with the [*Honolulu*] *Advertiser*. They were very well known in music and (literary) circles. They were very cultured, yeah? They were just very nice people. (Laughs) So that's where we landed. And that's where we lived.

So from then on, the story about not being able to find a job, all this good stuff, yeah.

MK: So you settled in in Mānoa, and the next thing is that you had to find a job.

EP: Right.

MK: How did that go?

EP: Well, I went over to the University [of Hawai'i], and they were hungry for what my papers said. I was given a one-year contract. I signed it. Well, the minute I got on campus, I didn't understand anything. I didn't understand anything at all, because it was like my vision and versions of a business school. First place, all of the students were like little robots: they were all short, had dark hair, and most of them wore glasses.

(Laughter)

EP: There wasn't any student activity. Everybody lived (at home). I mean, if they lived there, they were as quiet as mice. You would never know it. There was nothing that even looked like a high school, let alone a college. But then when I went in to the first class room, it was impossible. Had rapt attention, absolutely impossible to stimulate conversations and get ideas, okay? Finally it was like "You tell me, then that's right."

Even to the point of, "How do you know it's right?"

"Because you told me."

"But the book, if you read your book on page eighty-two, it'll say that's not right at all. Why didn't you ask me? I was wrong. Why was I saying what was different from the book?"

"No, you told me, so it's here." So I thought, hey, what the heck kind place is this? I can't stand it. I was a miserable bitch. I was. I was arrogant, I was so Haole that I squeaked. I knew more than anybody else, and my mouth never stopped. I didn't realize I was being so overbearing, 'cause everybody in San Fernando was more overbearing than me, okay? That's the truth.

(Laughter)

EP: So I didn't last. I quit. I walked out, two months.

MK: And then what did you do for a job?

EP: (Laughs) I thought that was gonna be duck soup, right? After all, I'm so wonderful, right? Beautiful on top of it. (Laughs) I started applying to every place that I thought would have anything. That's the only university there was. There weren't other schools. I applied every place. I looked in the want ads, but I didn't like Punahou, I liked Dr. [John F.] Fox, [president, Punahou School], but I didn't think I wanted to live with more San Fernando Valley-ite-type folks.

But I figured the phone would ring, but the phone didn't ring. And the phone didn't ring. And I put in applications, and go back and put in the application again. They wouldn't even remember you, you know, and you knew they did. And they'd say, "Oh, no, well fill out another application," right? So things were going along, must have been three or four months. By this time, my rather extravagant use of our funds was acute. By this time, the money that—I had sold my house when we came over here. But I spent it like it was water, too. (Chuckles) And having our vacation. (Chuckles) But then I looked, and wow, no money coming in. Well, I had it, and it was an issue. I could go to the navy and suggest to them that I'm not getting any allotment now, which I wasn't, okay. And that's illegal. You know, they could make him pay. I wasn't gonna do that. I wasn't gonna make anybody do anything.

In the meantime, my mother's calling every five minutes with, "I told you, I told you. It's okay, you come home. Come back, and everything'll be right. Everything," blah, blah. They didn't even really know half of it, 'cause it got so bad, I was so scared of running out of money, that I thought, well, I've gotta really be careful now. I'd give the kid bus money and lunch money, okay, go to school. At that time, bus fare was a dime, and lunch was a quarter. But then I needed bus fare to go into Honolulu to look for a job. But I wouldn't do it, so I'd walk from Kākela into Honolulu, to save bus fare, and back.

Then the food thing became acute, so I started looking at, "Wait a minute, gonna run out of money." Well, at that time, the dairies delivered me milk, so I could run up a milk bill, which I did. I think I ran up an eighty dollar milk bill—milk, cottage cheese, anything they would deliver, right? We were down to the point of Campbell's vegetable soup, beef vegetable, and it had the most nutrition in it per can that I could find. I had latched onto the fact that rice was a pretty good thing, right? So I had these *chawan*, and they were really pretty. They were porcelain ones, really, really pretty. So we'd have a bowl of soup with rice and split a can. That would be dinner. But the kid would've eaten lunch at school, right? I would put candles on the table, I picked hibiscus outside and put 'em on the table every night, so that dinner would have candles and flowers, and this bowl of soup with rice and milk, and that was food. (Laughs)

You should talk to Bill about Campbell's soup, vegetable soup. (Laughs) We won't touch it with a ten-foot pole. But at the time, he never said—I would have collapsed, I would have given in, if it wasn't for that kid. Because what he would say, you can't believe a little dude would be this aware of your feelings. But you are, you've got kids, so you know. He'd come in, and I'd light the candles and everything. "Oh, wow, good. Soup tonight. Great. Yum, yum, yum." If he'd once said, "I'm hungry, I want something else," I would have collapsed.

Well, that was bad, but that taught me a lot. I never worried [before] about where money came from or ever being hungry or anything like that. It taught me to understand the mothers, particularly when I was working at Pālama [Settlement], their situations, what it felt like when you couldn't feed your kid, because the things that crossed my mind were wild. They really were, to the point of, hey, where are people making money here? If the money runs out, and I don't have any more—see, welfare was never a thought. I never think of that. But where then could I make money. The only things that were there were bars—that's the only want ads. And I didn't know what to do. But I knew I could do it if they could. (Laughs) I never had to, because in the meantime, I got fortunate. Queen's Hospital got into their problem with accreditation, right?

Somebody called me and said, "Oh, are you still available?" (Chuckles) I ran all the way down there and went to work, like I said, as an instructor and a counselor, doing their vocational and their personal counseling, doing all the testing, then teaching. They had me teaching three classes, then it was four. Ruth Ono called me, and she said, "You know, you haven't been doing clinical nursing since you were in training."

I said, "That's right."

"Well, you know, as an advantage for you, the supervisor on our mental health unit,"—called *Pu'uhōnua*—it wasn't a locked unit, then. It had swinging bamboo doors. But anyway—"is going on vacation, and you can have this wonderful opportunity. You can fill in for her as a supervisor, and that will give you experience." That made really, really good sense. And I thought she was going to say, "And it'll be a little extra money." But what she said, "And the new class won't be coming in for two weeks." (Laughs)

So, okay, I worked the nights as the supervisor. The supervisor who had been on a floor, and I found out how I got to be the night supervisor was the only people working with me were orderlies. (Chuckles) Filipino orderlies. They taught me a lot in trying to get along and trying to understand, right? I'm more Haole than Haole, right? They're more Filipino than Filipino, right? So we're sitting, and I thought we had been trying to communicate. We're talking about, do you do anything besides work at the hospital? And this one man—I'll never forget him—said, "Oh, yes, ma'am. I have a fig parm," that was it.

I said, "Oh, you grow figs. I didn't know figs grew here." And he looked at me funny, and I'm talking about, "Well, do you sell them directly, or do you go through packaging, processing?" We're talking on, I'm trying to talk, and he's going, "Mm hmm, yeah, yeah," thinking this woman is insane, I'm sure. (MK laughs.) I'm trying to have a civilized conversation. Two nights later, he had to open a big juice can for—we gave them juice at eleven o'clock at night. He didn't have the automatic (can opener), he had the one you have to. . . . With a kind of a knob. Cut his finger. He came out and blood was coming out, and I said, "Oh, my goodness, what happened?"

He said, "Oh, my pinger, my pinger."

I said, "Your finger?"

"My pinger." After we tended to it, I got to thinking, wait a minute.

So I went back, and I said, "You know, Dole company, did you ever work for them?"

"No."

"Yeah, they raise um, uh. . ."

He says, "Fineapples."

"Sure." Then it dawned on me, the *F*s were the *P*s and the *P*s were the *F*s, (MK laughs) and it was backwards. So all the time I was talking about fig farms, he was talking about pig farms.

(Laughter)

EP: Okay, I learned about Filipinos and their language, right?

(Laughter)

EP: So it was good. After I worked there—I completed the contract. And \$327 a month doesn't sound like much now, but at that time, it was kind of plenty. It wasn't plenty, but it bought more than vegetable soup, let's put it that way.

Then I decided maybe I could get a night job, too, right? So I went to work in Waikīkī three nights a week in a shop that was—they had the old Waikīkī Tavern, upstairs-downstairs, and then there was kind of a walkway, a place in the back called The Huddle. And there were these little shops there. There was this lady whose name was Bete, B-E-T-E, who now has muumuus all over the place. But at that time, she had a surf shop. They had those bright-colored surf pants that are now common, but then, they were rare. She's the only one who did them. Fancy braid all over everything, yeah? And surf shirts that were like buccaneer shirts with pullovers. So I worked there as a sales clerk at night. So that helped, okay. And I found an ad for a kindergarten principal. I went to work for them.

MK: How was that experience?

EP: Oh, that was great. That was wonderful. That's where I ran into the three Hawaiian ladies that *hānaied* Bill—and me, too—but Lei Malterre really did formally *hānai* Bill. Oh, that was great. In fact, through that thing, before I went to McKinley, first place I worked was Mother Rice [Pre-School] in Mo'ili'ili. I had had a bad experience with what was then the Bishop Bank, now the First Hawaiian Bank. But my bad experience was I was sent the remainder of my house payment, for the sale of my house, in a certified check. I had opened an account at Bishop Bank, 'cause people told me that was what you did. So I went down with my cashier's check and put it in, and they told me there would be a thirty-day hold, that I couldn't use the money. Well, I didn't understand that at all, because it was not a regular check. I don't know, I just felt like I was being treated very badly. One of the kids at Mō'ili'ili, at Mother Rice,

was a little girl whose name was Lily Takamoto. Her father brought her to school every day. Her father, in our conversations, told me that they were opening a new branch of the bank he just went to work for—he was a young man—called Central Pacific Bank in Mō'ili'ili. And I said, "Oh, really?" Take my money out, come put it in with Fred at Central Pacific.

(Laughter)

EP: A great relationship there. Later, when I went to work at Pālama, I kept the account with Central Pacific, but I went to look for Fred, and Fred had been transferred to Kalihi branch. He was the manager there. So moved my money to Kalihi branch. So then through the ages, Fred then was—he opened the 'Aiea branch, so he called and said, "I'm gonna take your account with me." Okay, so he did. From there, then, he opened the Waipahu branch, okay? So our account went to Waipahu, too. (MK laughs.) Well, let me tell you, it's still at Waipahu, because from there, Fred was made vice-president and shot upstairs. We still have our bank account in Waipahu. We have never lived in Waipahu. (MK laughs.) And even the bank people who—Fred, this is a long time ago—they don't know why it's there, right? The new managers are always saying, "Oh, you sold your house in Waipahu."

"No."

(Laughter)

EP: "You moved from Waipahu?"

"No."

(Laughter)

EP: "Don't worry about it." The other day, about our planned move to Las Vegas—we're planning to move to Vegas in July, I got to thinking, why do I feel funny about maybe we're not doing the right thing? Maybe we don't have enough money. Maybe this is the wrong move. So then I told Joe [EP's husband], and he says, "Well, why don't you go talk to Fred?"

I said, "I don't know where Fred is." So I said, "Maybe Fred died." I mean, it's been ten years since I talked to Fred. Or maybe Fred retired and has gone somewhere. So I picked up the phone—this was just a month ago—and called Central Pacific, and said, "Can you tell me how to get in touch with Mr. Fred Takamoto?"

They said, "One moment please." They transferred me to his department. He's still at the Downtown [office]. He's first senior vice-president. He said, "Earlene! Where have you been?"

So I said, "I'd like to talk to you, but I don't want to waste your time, but I've got something I'd like to run by you."

He says, "Well, how fast can you get down here? I'm not doing anything this morning." So we went flying down there, and there he was. (Laughs) And we ran it by him, and he says, "Hey, go for it." He says, "That's what I want to do." And then we're going on and on.

I said, "Well, I'm sorry to waste your time. I know it sounds silly, like that."



And he says, "Oh, I'm flattered that you wanted my opinion."

So it was really funny. What did you get . . .

MK: A relationship.

EP: Yeah, right, that has lasted. Several times—his kids went to Pearl City High School. Those were the girls, and he had two boys, and they were in the band at Pearl City. They marched in the Rose [Bowl] Parade, and Joe and I always spend Christmas on the Mainland at [Lake] Tahoe then down at the race track at Santa Anita. Santa Anita is right by Pasadena. So in the two years that their kids were there, they would send stuff over with us for us to take to their kids. So it was like we knew them, but we didn't really, yeah?

MK: So that relationship carried on.

EP: Yeah, right.

MK: From the 1950s to the present. And that happened when you were the principal of the . . .

EP: At Mō'ili'ili, at Mother Rice, yeah.

MK: And then after, how long were you there at Mother Rice as a principal?

EP: Well, Mother Rice, I was only there, I don't know, a year or so, I guess. And then after---well, a principal left, and they asked me if I would go down to [another school] and take over there. There were 300 kids [there] and I stayed till I went to [the U.S.] Trust Territory [of the Pacific Islands].

[Before the Trust Territory job,] I took another job, too. It was at Island Paradise [School]. I did their testing and their school evaluation, and I taught one class after school of---well, they really were advanced kids. They had not labeled them as behavior problems, although they were in most cases, but they were aware that they were not dumb kids. (Chuckles) They were just kids who were having a hard time following all the rules, right? So I had that class, and I did the testing, yeah? For Island Paradise [School]. Then I went off to Trust Territory.

MK: And tell me about that Trust Territory assignment.

EP: (Laughs) Well, there again, guess what? I read it in the newspaper. I didn't know where Truk was. I had never even heard of it, to tell you the truth. I thought it was a thing with wheels. But it sounded really fabulous. It sounded really interesting. They were advertising for a psychological researcher, and then had slash, teacher. That sounds funny, but that sounds real interesting. So I went to the interview with---they had their representative from the government here. Actually, the Solomon Committee (United Nations) was paying for that, but I didn't know that. But I didn't care who paid for it as long as I got paid, right? It said, you know, benefits, trips back home, transportation, dependents, all this stuff. It sounded really good. So then the more I talked to them and I saw the pictures, the more I got, oh, I got anxious. I wanted to go. Deb [EP's daughter] was on the Mainland, Bill was here. But I had [a hānai family] Lei and her family. And they said, "Go, go, go. Bill'll stay with us," all this good stuff.

So I did. I signed a two-year contract and got on the airplane at one o'clock in the morning. I know this is silly, but one o'clock in the morning with my little suitcase. Oh, and I did take one thing. I had one thing with me—a little organ, a little pump organ. The piano had always been a real—in fact, my kids will tell you, Bill would tell you, you can always tell before you got in the house what mood I was in, 'cause when you came in, you could hear me playing, and you knew. He'll go down and tell you which songs key on certain things, and that's true.

So I was told that I'd be met at the airport. It was like four o'clock or three o'clock in the morning, the morning before. They told me that the head of the education department for Trust Territory, Dr. Bob Gibson, would meet me. He's still here. (Laughs) Yeah, it's a little---my life's got all these little circles that go around, you know.

But anyway, long flight, right? Scared, right? No idea whether I was (EP knocks off microphone, tape inaudible).

(Taping interrupted, then resumes.)

EP: So got off the airplane in the semi-dark, right? Looking around, couldn't see anybody, then I saw this man, Haole man, grey hair, about a week's growth of beard—not a really beard beard, just dirty not shaved. Wrinkled, wrinkled, wrinkled, wrinkled shorts. Wrinkled, wrinkled, wrinkled, wrinkled shirt. It's Dr. Gibson. (Laughs) So he says, "We'll take you, leave you at the Trust Territory compound," 'cause there weren't any hotels then. He handed me some onion-skin papers in a folder and said, "Here, read this. In the morning you get on the plane and go down to Truk. We'll pick you up. Don't worry about everything. Everything's fine." And he dropped me off at the Trust Territory compound. Walked in, and you know the smell? The mildew-mold smell? You know that smell? And they had dark green monk's cloth. I don't know if you remember monk's cloth. It was a heavy weave cloth that they made drapes and pillows and stuff, dark green. And they smell. And there's nobody in this hotel. Dr. Gibson says, "That's right, there's nobody up here, but here, here. This is gonna be your room here. There isn't a key, and, oh, the bathroom is right down the hall." I had never shared a bathroom. I had never had a hotel room that didn't have its own bathroom. I never had a room that didn't have my own bathroom. Tell me, here I am in the godforsaken place, (MK laughs) the bathroom's down the hall, I don't have a key. This is my room, maybe? I'm supposed to go in there—and I'm tired, right? I thought, "Hell with it."

So I took a shower. I didn't ask, is this the men's or the women's bathroom, incidently. I didn't know, okay? Anyway, I went back in to lie down. Decided to read this stuff I was supposed to know.

END OF SIDE ONE

SIDE TWO

EP: So I went to read this stuff, thinking it's going to tell me about the customs and the language and what I'm going to get into. It doesn't have the customs and the language and what I'm going to get into. It's a dossier of every American that lives in Truk: where they came from, their marriage, if they were or they weren't, where they worked, any personal little items that the personnel people had put in, and that's what it was. I'm reading it, it's kind of like reading

"True Confessions," but I'm thinking, "Why do I want to know this?" I mean, why am I reading this stuff? But he told me read it, so I'm reading it, right?

Well, the morning came, and a really nice little lady came poking her head in the room, (laughs) and told me, "You better get up, because they're coming to get you in about half hour, yeah? Because I didn't have an alarm clock. I didn't know when the plane was. He said, "Well, you leave in the morning." What's in the morning? It already was, like, four o'clock. So here came Dr. Gibson. He had bathed. He had not shaved, but he had bathed, and had on different shorts. I get on the plane, and he says, "You go to Truk, and the dist ad . . ."

And I said, "What's the dist ad?"

"That's the district administrator, and he'll meet you, and his name is Hal Halverson, and they'll take care of you from there on out. They'll give you a house, they'll give everything. So I went to get on the airplane, and these were old navy—I forget the name. They're the flying boats that had been thrown away by the navy after the war, but was then used by Trust Territory, but flown by Pan American pilots. But here came this fat bird, right? I got in it, and there were ten seats, and then there were cargo netting all around, and the cargo was in there. There was like groceries and everything that they were taking to Truk, right? The mail. I mean everything, okay? I think there were three other people besides me on the plane. So they did the hatch down, we get in the water, we're taking off, and all of a sudden I see it leaking. The pilot became aware I was not altogether comfortable. (Laughs) "Oh, no, no, that's nothing. Don't worry about that. Don't worry about that." Little further down the road, one of the windshield wipers doesn't work. "Don't worry about that. Everything's okay."

(Laughter)

EP: Found out later those planes were held together with wire and chewing gum, but were absolutely non-destructible, I mean like a Model-T car, as faithful as you can get. But I wasn't used to having water coming in and windshield wipers flying off and stuff.

Got to Truk, landed—there was no runway at that time, had to land in the water—crawl up on the cement. And here was this little covey of folks. And Hal Halverson—reddish hair, kind of balding, glasses, Haole, wearing shorts, of course, and tank top and slippers. And then there was the interesting one, the grand dame of them all. (Laughs) This Haole lady, dripping diamonds, smoking cigarettes in a long, black cigarette holder.

(Laughter)

EP: She was the judge's wife, yeah? She was the ruling lady of society there. (Chuckles) There were about ten American people there, so she was the ruling—they all didn't have their families. So, they were really nice to me, and they said, "Well, there isn't any real reason in getting you settled in right now. What we're planning to do is this afternoon, you're gonna get picked up by this boat and taken over to Fefen"—that's an atoll—"where you're going to learn the language."

And I said, "Oh, that's nice, I'm going to school," right?

They said, "Before you go, go up to the commissary and pick out your food, and you'll have

three Prima's burners, right? So take whatever you want." So anyway, I picked out what I wanted. They had everything, (laughs) all kinds of gourmet food in those commissaries. And anyway, they put in two fifths of Jack Daniels. I didn't put it in, but they put it in for me. (Laughs) They knew. And get in the boat, off we go. There's this priest, and right now I can't remember his name, even, and I know him as well as the back of my hand, 'cause he was my (chuckles) hand maiden for sure. He did economic development. His name will come.

MK: Is it Fran Hezel? No?

EP: Father. . . . He's still out there. He put together the farmers' co-op. It will come. Anyway, took me out there, says, "We're going to leave you out here. Here, I want you to meet Chief Archie Moses, and he'll be your liaison, and he'll teach you, and he'll communicate with you." Well, here was the tent, and the tent had netting around the bottom for ventilation, right?

Oh, before I went out there, they told me I had to buy a handgun, because I was alone, okay? So I did, but it never crossed my mind until this particular time. Chief Moses said, "Oh, we were looking forward so much that we made your own special *benjo*, 'cause we know about Americans." But I went to look at the *benjo*, and this was so funny. You know how big I am, right? Okay. They had built one out of hibiscus fiber, beautifully woven with design on the outside even, this enclosure out of hibiscus. A square, like a little thing. Only one trouble, it came right to here on me. (Laughs) If I went in, my head was sticking out of here.

(Laughter)

EP: It covered up a little bit as possible, right? But they meant well. They said they understood about Americans, we're strange, right? So they were trying to do the right thing.

Well, the first night when I went to go to bed, (laughs) I cook my dinner. I went to put up my hair in curlers, okay? Pink curlers, I remember that. I had left one lantern on, and I went to turn it [off], and I looked. All around the bottom were brown feet. (MK laughs.) Big brown feet, medium brown feet, small brown feet, all brown feet, right?

(Laughter)

EP: I'm absolutely terrorized. They're coming to get me. Maybe they're cannibals, they're going to rape me. Oh, terrible. Here I am alone in this tent with these brown feet. And, god, I was so scared, I was so scared. Then I thought, I've got that gun, yeah? But what will I do with it. There's a whole bunch of them. I can't even see their faces. I mean, wow. 'Cause up high is ventilation, too. I didn't sleep a wink. I was terrorized all night long.

So when Chief Moses came down and I said to him in his little bit of English—I found out his vocabulary was only like three or four hundred words. Anyway, "Last night, I had a problem, yeah? They didn't break in, but there were people, and I want to report it to the police or whatever," right? (Laughs) He looked at me like—"You must be kidding." Then I found out I was the main attraction. They never saw one before. I was a *fefan*, a woman, but they never saw a *putchaputch*, a white-white. They call me white-white 'cause of my hair, right? So they all, for the evening's entertainment, would come down and watch the *fefan*'s activities.

Well, when I got to thinking about it, it must have been a pretty good show, if you see how they live. Cold cream all over, (MK laughs) hair up in curlers, (laughs) gargle (EP makes gargling sound).

(Laughter)

EP: Yeah, and to think, "Wow, I bet you were fun to watch." (MK laughs.) Then I wasn't scared. But I mean the idea that they were watching me bothered me. It bothered me for a long time, 'cause in my head I knew, "Hey, they're only looking 'cause you're doing different things and you're different. If you want to get along, this is it. You're looking at them so they're looking back. You just don't go look at night in their house, right?"

So anyway, I stared there for three months. You know I'm a garrulous individual, so you know I've got to learn to talk to somebody, right?

(Laughter)

EP: So I learned conversational basic Trukese, which I've now forgotten, except when I hear the words, you know. But they took me back over, and I set about doing my work. By that time—oh, they had assigned me—all of the Americans lived in Quonset huts. They were all air-conditioned, and big grass lawn, big screened-in veranda, like lanai, yeah? So it overlooked the lagoon and the valley, and waterfall right by my house. Just gorgeous. Just gorgeous. The ferry turns at night, the smoke from the village would come up and it turns a circle around, circle around, and the waterfall. Gorgeous, gorgeous, gorgeous. But it had three bedrooms, huge living room and dining room and kitchen and bathroom. And I said, "But I'm only me, only one. I don't need this big house. I need a little house."

"No, no, no. This is what's open. This is what you got." And since they furnished it all like that, they told me I had to hire two Trukese. All government employees had to hire two Trukese, 'cause that's the only form of money that's on the island, money-money.

I said, "But, I don't need. What do I need?"

They said, "Well, you need a maid." Okay, that made sense. I need a housekeeper, okay. So (laughs) the guy who was one of the administrative aides—a Trukese who later came here, I think he's a high chief or something—spoke fluent English, and he was like an Amway salesman practically. Big line of baloney. Had been up to Hawai'i. (Laughs) Anyway, so he told me there was this case of this young man who needed a job badly, and he was from Puluwat, and he had to learn to speak English, because what he wanted was to get a job as an oiler on the ship. So if I would give him a job as my houseboy, then he could learn English from me, then he could get his job on the ship. That made sense, so I said, "Sure, that's cool."

So then he brought him. And his name was Nick. And Nick had long ears. That was the first thing, his ears were down to here, right? And then he'd pick them up and put them on top of here. So he didn't know anything about cleaning or anything, but then I try to tell him, so we were speaking. I didn't know anything about Puluwat people either at that time, (laughs) except he only wore a *thu*. They all wore these *thus*, so (laughs). Anyway, would teach him, and like I had to show him how to iron, right? And he would ask, "Missus, what is?" And he would hold up whatever it was and I would tell him. One day he holds up a bra, and he says,



"What is?"

I say, "A brassiere."

He said, "A brassiere."

I said, "Right." He knew what it was for, he just didn't know its name. So he's ironing, "Brassiere, brassiere, brassiere." (MK laughs.)

I came home one day—I said do the whole big house-cleaning, right? Once a week. I came home, and out in the front, all my mats, all my furniture, all piled outside, with this much water, 'cause the floors all went down, 'cause they were built up on this. . . . It was like a swimming pool. This much water. He'd taken the hose to wash the inside of the house, right?

(Laughter)

EP: But it wasn't bad. I mean, he really tried hard, and he kept things really clean.

(Laughter)

EP: He even, I thought, was doing pretty good with the washing and ironing stuff. Except one day, he came down to my office, which was right in the school, and was standing there, and he looked terrible. He says, "Missus, I must leave."

I said, "Why?"

He says, "I must leave."

I said, "Oh, you got your job on the ship?" He didn't answer me, and I didn't know what it was.

He said, "I am destroying the garments." What he'd done is he'd tried to iron a nightgown, a nylon nightgown (laughs), and he'd melted a big old hole all over it. (MK laughs.) It so distressed him, he was totaled out, it really was. He says, "No, I cannot, I'm destroying your property, I cannot, I cannot." So [they] let him stay in the constabulary, which was now the jail. (MK laughs.) I mean, nobody ever stayed in it. It was like a motel. Never had any keys or anything. People stayed in there, the islanders stayed in there. They got him out, then they did get the captain to take him on board, 'cause he could speak minimal English by that time.

Then I found out—why was Nick different from the people? Other people would kind of give me funny look, right? And they said, "Oh, 'cause Puluwat people are fierce and really bad and big warriors." And in bad time, Puluwat people will come over here, and particularly they will [eat] people. They even ate Samoan people if they were really hungry. And so you don't mess with a Puluwat person. And I didn't realize that. But then today—I don't know about today, but then . . .

MK: That was their reputation.

EP: And these Puluwat people were known to be pretty fierce, and they didn't like them because

they ate their relatives or something. Anyhow.

So then I got Natsuko. And she was something and a half. She was by their terminology "older." But you realize at that time, the average life span for a woman in Truk was thirty-five. So she was probably forty, maybe forty. I did notice you didn't see any old people. But she was the belle of the ball, evidently, at one time. When the navy---the navy had pretty well left, but this was right at the end of the Korean [War] stuff, yeah? The navy guys were there, and she was evidently the party girl of all party girls. She had a whole flock of husbands, and she sang (laughs) in that Trukese voice. [EP sings with high-pitched, nasal voice.] (Laughs) But all the time she would sing. And she had this long, black hair, way down here, straight as anything. And she put coconut oil in it, and it was just as shiny. Then she would take a coconut rib, yeah? What do you call those? And use it for a hair pin. And put it up to here in kind of a little knot. And gorgeous, oh, excellent, excellent. Everything about Natsuko was wonderful.

Except then they told me that I had to hire somebody else, too. So then the dist ad told me, "Well, you know, you don't really need a yard boy, but Natsuko's married to a new husband, and he's very young, right?" And I know I came home and caught Natsuko playing with the public welfare guys. She'd call 'em up and that the phone wasn't working, and they would be inside playing. (Laughs) And so he said, "If Francisco's here, then Natsuko won't play, right? So if you hire Francisco to be the yard boy, then you get two for one. Plus Francisco can read a little bit of English, so Francisco can go to the commissary for you. Maybe make him a list and he can do the shopping."

So, okay, I'll hire Francisco. Great wages. A dollar a day. You realize that. (Laughs) Natsuko and I became very, very good friends. And only one thing she couldn't understand about me. I have this thing, and I still have it: I won't sleep on unironed sheets. Talk about nuts, right?

(Laughter)

EP: So I told her, "I want you to iron the sheets every day," right? So then I noticed they weren't being ironed. I'd come home, and what she'd do is she'd wash them, and then she'd hang them on the line, and then she'd put them right back on the bed and stretch them real tight. But they weren't ironed.

(Laughter)

EP: And I said, "Natsuko, at home, in Hawai'i, I do my own washing, my own ironing, everything, and I iron my sheets, right? So when you're working for me, I don't care if you do lots of things, but please iron my sheets."

She finally looks at me, she says, "But Missus, you're not even married."

(Laughter)

EP: I said, "Natsuko, I go to bed to sleep, not to play."

(Laughter)

EP: She shook her head. I didn't make any sense to her at all. (MK laughs.) But then she got clever. She would iron the pillow slips, and stretch the other sheets.

(Laughter)

EP: I thought, "You're never going to beat this lady, no matter what." But she was pregnant, and then I got a telephone call that she was at the hospital, that something had gone wrong, right? So I went down to the hospital, and they told me that she wasn't there. She had walked in, but the baby wasn't breathing. So she brought it in to see if they could make it come back to life. And so I felt really bad for her, losing a child, right? 'Cause I really liked this lady. She's my friend, okay? So I wanted to do something for her. She didn't want anything to be done. Just says, "No, I'll go home."

I says, "I'll get the taxi and we'll take you home." You know, government taxi.

She says, "No."

I said, "Well, I'll call Francisco to come get you."

"No." Natsuko was stubborn, incidentally. (Laughs) But anyway, she wrapped the baby in a piece of cloth, and then she wrapped the baby in banana leaves—she made a package—she put the baby on her head and went walking off in the night with this dead baby on her head. I was torn up. I was absolutely devastated. I couldn't go back to work, I cried, and then I felt so rotten about my friend going off with her dead baby on her head. And I can't help her, she doesn't want anything.

Then I learned a lot. Only one out of every three babies at that time—now we're talking in the 1960s—lived past the first year. So much like the Hawaiians, if you really go back, they didn't name babies, the Trukese didn't name babies, until they were a year old, 'cause they were going to die anyway. If you don't name them, and you don't go through the thing, then they're really not a person, right? Then the pain of the loss wasn't like the pain of a loss to us, right? Because she had not yet taken that baby as her baby. It was a thing, right? Then that made sense. I mean, how can you stand to get pregnant right after, right after, right? Out of every three, only one would live. You'd go crazy. But they didn't because they had a built-in stabilizer for their mental health. So I learned about that.

I learned a lot from Natsuko. And she would take off her dress. She wore these dresses that were just like just shoulders—and they probably still wear 'em—and just full, real full. Okay, I'd come home, and she had on her underskirt, which was made out of rice sacks with the printing still on them. (Chuckles) And she just had on her underskirt. She'd be doing the ironing and doing all the housework, 'cause then she'd be redressed to go home at night. I didn't want them to live in with me. They didn't understand that either. But I never had live-in servants, yeah? (Chuckles)

So then I went out to the church, Saint Xavier's, and saw Natsuko. She had on this bright pink—all the ladies were wearing this—bright pink organdy dress made like that with all kinds of embroidery on it. I looked, and one of the things on the embroidery says—you know how the script that says Coca-Cola? That was the design that was on it.

(Laughter)

EP: But the organdy you can see right through, right? But they wear underskirts, but no tops. So that was her good dress, her best dress. She only wore that dress to church, right?

MK: And then when you were in Truk, what was your basic assignment?

EP: My basic assignment was to take the question of why English was not spoken, investigate it at the different villages, interview people in different age groups, try to see why—if the school was functioning, and they did have some schools—why English wasn't taught or learned. That was about it, to come up with an answer. Of course, we knew that was going nowhere. We knew within being talking to and being around the people, within a month I knew the answer already. I mean, it was clear as anything. But then what am I going to do the rest of my time? I'm stuck here for two years.

So I thought, if they don't speak English, they won't learn English at the little schools that are in the village, and they aren't being taught, really, because nobody wants to teach them. The people that are teaching them really don't know the language either. So then I said, well, there are about seven Americans that were living there with their families, and they were all taking correspondence classes, the only way that they could. . . . So I went to Hal and I asked him, "Why don't we open an English-speaking school? Can you give me a room?" So we did. He says, "Well, you know, instead of just having it open for the Americans, anybody who wants their kid to come to a school where only English is spoken"—this is the reverse of Pūnana Leo—"come, Trukese kids."

So I opened this school, and it was a blast. With the older kids, I used their—I think it was Coolidge was most of the correspondence work. I would use the text for their assignments basically, but only do it in a social setting. The little kids, they were my delight in everything. Taught them with Dr. Seuss [Theodore Seuss Geisel] books. That was extremely revolutionary at the time. Now, that's standard fare and has been for twenty years. But then it wasn't. But it made sense to me. I look at [*Adventures with*] *Dick and Jane*, which they had Dick and Jane books [traditional reading primers]. Nothing in the Dick and Jane books made sense to Trukese kids, for the kids out there. The hat, the train, puff, nothing made sense. The drinking fountain. Dr. Seuss, everything was imaginary and humorous and pretend people. It wasn't anything real. There wasn't one human, animal, in any of his books. I mean, if they were, they were really distorted. So that made sense. Besides, it was fun.

So I started the English-speaking school. So I ended up, that was 99 percent of my work. It was what I really cared about. The other was just doing the paperwork and validating what the people in Washington already knew. Then coming down to at the end, when they came up with what did I propose to change the thing. I'm afraid my ideas to change it weren't terribly well received. Oh, everybody agreed, but then nobody would do anything about it, because it was changing basics.

If you want people to learn from you, there's two ways. You gotta force them, if you have the power, say, "You've got to." And that's what the Japanese did, okay? Or you've got to motivate them so that they want to. So they would have to, number one, trust you. Or you would have to have something so much that they wanted, yeah? That they didn't care if they liked you or trusted you if they can get from you something that important. Okay, so that's the



only way you could do it. You could say, "You're our possession now. You will speak English," and they would. Okay?

Or you can go the humanitarian, idealistic way of motivating them. What do we have that they wanted? Then only thing they wanted from the Americans at that time was liquor and Kool cigarettes. Oh, transistor radios, too. I didn't know that we could say that for everybody who learns—you know, if you're gonna do behavior mod[ification]—well, for every head of household who will do nothing but speak English (laughs) will be given two six-packs of Budweiser. (Laughs) And I knew nobody would go with that, right?

Make them like and trust you? Should they like and trust us? Were we trustworthy? Did we mean what we say? Did we keep our word? None of the above. So forget it. (Laughs) The chances were then it will just go the way that it went, 'kay?

The experience with the English-speaking school was fine, 'cause they decided they should have a broader experience. So I ordered tadpoles from a scientific house in San Francisco. 'Cause they never saw frogs, they don't know what is tadpoles, and that's great fun, right? I ran into trouble with the island agriculture people right off the bat, that they didn't want me to import the frogs.

So I said, "Well, but if we can't have frogs"—oh, I had a Peter Rabbit, those pretty—I don't know. They used to make them and they were [in] the [Little] Golden Books, and they were gorgeous color. The pictures were just tremendous, and the bunny rabbits were so pretty, and they're holding big Easter eggs and everything, right? So I had that. They didn't have the slightest idea what was a rabbit, right? So I thought, well, if I get a rabbit that is a male rabbit, and there is no other rabbit in Truk, they cannot be afraid that the rabbit is going to get out and multiply all over anything. The worst thing the rabbit could do would be to escape, one rabbit, and live a life of whatever, right? But he's not going to go out and multiply, 'cause they said they'll destroy the native plants and everything.

So I went to Guam to find a rabbit. I found out there was this priest who used to raise rabbits. He'd tried to introduce raising rabbits to the Guamanians for a living, to make money, but it didn't go very good. But he still had some rabbits. So I wanted a rabbit, but they didn't have any white rabbits. So the rabbit I got was one of those black, flop-eared ones. Okay, put it in the cage, bringing it back to Truk. The guys on the airplane were scared to lift the cage up. They didn't know what that was in there. (MK laughs.) They were scared to death of it. They would not touch it. They were big strong guys, wouldn't touch the thing. Have to carry it myself. (MK laughs.) Okay, I did.

Got to Truk, it was worse. 'Cause there, they were scared. But the dist ad, he thought this was a pretty good idea, see? So he told them, "No, it's not going to hurt you." So then they built a cage. They had built this cage and put it in it. They had it at the school for the kids to take care of. But it wasn't white and didn't look like that one, but it was a rabbit. Well, what frightened them was the fact that it didn't walk. Rabbits don't walk like other animals, they hop. And their nose.

MK: Wiggling.

EP: All the time, right? Scared to death. So anyway, with the rabbit, that was okay, until. . . . He



got to be really, really, really the pet. Got big, like that. So I'd take him out of the cage and let him run around in the classroom, right? And that was really great, until—the hotel used to send down cookies and juice at ten o'clock in the morning. The cookies were like discs.

(Laughter)

EP: But they were sweet. They love sweet things, but they don't know anything about baking powder or yeast or anything that rises. So the kids would sometimes put their leftover cookie in their desk. We had the desks that were open. So the rabbit would stand up and eat, eat, eat (MK laughs) bites of cookie. Well, he didn't get into any trouble doing that. But one day, we had a crisis. He got in and he ate crayons.

MK: Oh, no.

EP: He ate a whole box of crayons. Then he had a whole box of colorful diarrhea. He got really, really sick. He was lying down, and he was sick, sick, sick, sick. The kids were having terrible time. So I called the hospital.

(Laughter)

EP: And got [a doctor] to come down.

(Laughter)

EP: He didn't know anything about rabbits to tend to Bunny, right? He got Bunny fluid. Gave Bunny enema, gave Bunny all kinds of stuff, cleared him up. But I had fun experiences with those kids.

MK: I'm going to . . .

EP: Go?

MK: It's 10:50.

EP: We didn't make much [progress].

MK: I'm going to end it here, and we'll continue.

EP: We haven't gotten to Pālama yet.

MK: Not yet, but . . .

END OF INTERVIEW

Tape No. 27-18-3-97

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

with

Earlene Piko (EP)

Honolulu, Hawai'i

April 17, 1997

BY: Michi Kodama-Nishimoto (MK)

MK: This an interview with Mrs. Earlene Piko at her home in Honolulu, O'ahu, Hawai'i, on April 17, 1997. The interviewer is Michiko Kodama-Nishimoto.

Okay. For today's interview, we're going to continue from the end of your Trust Territory in the Pacific Islands days. And the first question is how come you left?

EP: My contract was up, and instead of renewing it—'cause my kids were here [in Hawai'i]—and it just was time to not sign another one. I had signed one extension. I'd signed a two-year [contract], and then I signed again for another two years. Then I decided it was time to come back. And so I did, came back.

MK: And when you came back to Hawai'i, I know that you started working at the Pālama Settlement [in 1963]. Now how did that come about?

EP: Just by accident. (Laughs) I came back, I looked around for what jobs were available, and they had an ad in the paper. And it was listed under group work. Well, I wasn't a group worker, not really, but I'd done a lot of group work. So I decided to go give it a shot. Why not, right? So I did. And I had had earlier experiences with the swim team when Bill, my son, was swimming for HSC [Hawai'i Swim Club], and Harry Mamizuka was coaching the Pālama team, and we collaborated for a while. I think one summer, Bill even swam under Mami [Coach Harry Mamizuka]. I think it was only one summer. But anyway, real close little community. So I had knowledge it was a good place. So I went down for an interview, and that was it.

MK: And at that time, who interviewed you?

EP: Lorin Gill, who was like the program director. We had a kind of long interview, maybe hour and a half? And he hired me.

MK: And at that point, had you known Lorin Gill or any other person working at Pālama Settlement?

EP: No, no, no. I knew---well, I couldn't say I know him. I knew [executive director] Jack Nagoshi peripherally when I was at Mother Rice and he was at the Mō'ili'ili Community

Center. But I didn't know him, not know him know him. So then Lorin took me in and had Jack okay the hiring. I don't know, maybe he dragged his feet. I don't know. But they hired me. I think I went in to interview on a Monday, and I think I went to work the next day. Was real quick. And I moved in---I hadn't found---I was staying with my Malterres, my *hānai* family, right? So then the only thing Lorin said they wanted to be sure [was] that I could live there, live on the [Pālama Settlement] premises. Because it has always been the [executive] directors [living on the premises], until [Arne] Larson. And I guess Jack didn't want to, so they were getting away from that model anyway. But with Lorin the settlement was still a very close thing to him. He liked that model, he believed it. And since he wasn't married, and his mother was living then—they were living together up Round Top—[Gill felt] somebody should [live on the premises], and it should be somebody high enough to have a little authority. So that was one of the things, the inclusions, that I live there.

Well, the rent was really cheap. It was like subsidized. I don't know how much I paid. It wasn't very much. Something like \$125. I mean, something little bit. And no problem with transportation, right? So that's how I went to work.

**MK:** Tell me about that settlement philosophy of the worker living on the premises of Pālama Settlement.

**EP:** Well, that goes back to the basic underlying philosophy of the settlement house movement that came out of Toynbee [Hall] in England. That was where the group of people who were, if not affluent, they were middle class. They were well-to-do, they were coping people who didn't have problems, well, major problems. So that said what you should do with slums and places where people are deprived and everything is rotten, is to take your family into [the community]. They [felt] that we learn most from other people what we really need to learn if you need to learn to live in this society, you'll be okay. So things like health, parenting, they didn't use those words, but that was what it was. Recreation in a sense of even things like flower arranging or grouping, or things that people did to make a person's life whole and round. If you tell people what to do, that's one thing. But if you're living right there with them, and they see you living right there with them, it becomes a whole different thing. That is really true, because the difference I found between going to an office and working in a place away from where I lived and relating to the people in the neighborhood—the people in the neighborhood saw me in my house muumuu hanging up my laundry every day with no makeup, in curlers or whatever. They saw me down at the store in the corner, there at Sing Loy Lane. They saw me yelling at the kids, they saw me doing whatever you do. But totally as an equal, and not as somebody you go in their office, and they're sitting at a desk one way, and you're one way, and you don't think there's much in common.

And I was in the position of being taught that I couldn't hide behind any of these barriers of superiority and recognizing—I learned that in Micronesia—that the way to share is to really open up and just hang out there and let people see you at your worst and how you are, and particularly with your family. I think losing that is very sad, but with our modern kind of way—you see, only people who are like religious still do that, people who are like converts and monks and stuff. They go in and they live with the people, but they're trying to convert their souls. The settlement wasn't trying to convert anybody. It was trying to share. Just to share. Not even get anything back. At the beginning, the settlement workers didn't even get paid. They just moved to those areas and lived and then things set up. Then in the United States, the movement was taken over by Jane Addams, and she established Hull-House. [There

was also] Henry Street House, and one other one. Anyway, those were all contemporary with Pālama Settlement being made into a settlement.

MK: Maybe this is kind of a difficult question to answer, but you're Haole, (EP laughs) and you were asked to work at Pālama Settlement and live at Pālama Settlement. Now, how was it for you, because of your being Haole and the client population being non-Haole?

EP: To be perfectly frank and this is—and you know, they say ignorance is bliss—well, number one, the thinking of the world in '63 here—and remember, I had only been here and in Micronesia for my adult life. I mean, school, that's over there, right? I didn't think about it. I did know, and I learned, I learned real quickly. Lorin helped me learn part of that, but the people really taught me that they weren't going to like me. They weren't going to come up and want to be friends with me. They might come up if they thought I had something they wanted, they'd come up. But they weren't going to want me to be their friend. They weren't going to trust me, because I'm sure they thought I didn't understand anything about their life. I have to accept them where they were.

But with me, I had the right, the obligation, and the chance to learn about them. So if I could learn where they were, then we could communicate. I learned later through the years, you have to work harder if you have white skin. I learned that, and I used that. Now this is probably going to sound terrible. I was very sensitive to the neighborhood and their feelings. Not that they were right, but that was their feelings. It didn't matter. I recognized that there were certain people—and this is certain ethnicities—they could more quickly [be accepted,] make [progress]. If you took a person of one race—or if in the case of being local, that's almost a race in itself—as [being] different [from] a Mainlander [who] would come, working the same way, hard as you can, the guy with the browner skin tones will be successful [at Pālama Settlement] within six months. The guy with the white skin, working hard as he can, just as skilled, if he sticks to the job—and an awful lot of 'em didn't—it would take him two years at least for anybody to trust him. But that's because of years of—how did they get to feeling that way? Because they had years of experience that validated those thoughts. "These guys are here, and I'm down here. They think they're better than me, they're all rich, they're all whatever," right? That's all they know.

And the Japanese, they were all the probation officers, they were the principals at schools, they were the teachers, they were the oppressors. They were social workers who came into their house to go through their closets and see if the toilet seat was up, yeah? So that was hard. Japanese were hard. It wasn't popular to say, because the civil rights movement was going on, and on one hand, you're saying one thing, and on another hand, you're almost doing opposite. But the facts were the facts. That's the way it was. I knew it from the blood of my own hands and back. The thing is had I gone in and expected to be liked, to be trusted, to be wanted, I would have quit, 'cause it would have broken my heart. But I recognized, (laughs) you know, I'm foreign material. This is as weird as you can get.

The little kids were, of course, the easiest ones. The little kids, the smaller kids. The adolescents were the hardest to deal with, because they were overt and rebellious and angry. So they would say things to you, like "Who the fuck made you?" A million times, that was said. That's right. Okay, all right, fine. But the little ones, that was why working in arts and crafts where I went in with the little kids, five-year-olds, six-year-olds like that. They're the ones who trail after you and want—you know how school is. They want to do things for you,

do the rubbish and the trash, got to go get this, that kind of stuff. When you're not in session, they find you out on the grounds, and they come and follow you around, right? In the swimming pool, same kind of thing. Trust, yeah? I was a lifeguard at the swimming pool. (Chuckles) Yeah, well, [there] was a regular lifeguard, and I was the substitute.

So through those kids, you built kind of a following. Then their parents would come—I mean, the little ones. So that was a door that was opened. Now this didn't have anything to do with real personal issues or things like that. These were the easy things to talk about. But at least they saw you, they knew you.

I was never afraid. I never locked my door. Really never crossed my mind that there was anything to be afraid of. It really was true, because I was so alone at that time in the essence of things. I think I was the only Haole Haole in a sixteen-block area, you know. Everybody knew me. They didn't know my name, but they knew what I was. I was this Haole—they called me the white-haired biddy that lived down there. I never walked and went around in places where I had no business to be. If I had business in Mayor Wright [Homes] housing at a house, I went to it. Night, morning, any kind, and felt perfectly safe. If I would just roam around in the dark of night or whatever, I don't know, I might have gotten beat on the head or gotten my purse taken. I don't know, but I wouldn't have been there [if it was not safe]. I don't think I would have gotten my purse taken, but maybe I would've. So I had no feeling at all of—in fact, I felt more threatened in Hawai'i Kai than I ever felt threatened in Pālāma.

MK: You know, when you were there at Pālāma, were there any incidents of, say, vandalism, property damage, or any violence in those days?

EP: Oh, lots of violence. But now you think back—you're not old enough to remember that—it was acceptable to call, when your boyfriend slapped you, Hawaiian love. That was the value of the day. So there was a lot of physicalness. I don't know whether that was violence or not, you see, because they were physical expressions, okay. I found out the Samoans get piled with a lot of damage. But when the Samoans came, the word for spanking a child for a discipline is *sasa*. That is also the term for stick or club. So you don't know whether somebody was talking about a stick, or whether they were gonna discipline their child. Maybe they didn't hit him. Even if they didn't hit him, it was still *sasa*, right? So the thinking was really different in those days. Terribly different than it is now. It's been very hard on the people who held the other cultural beliefs to adapt to—in fact, I had a lot of clients who had terrible difficulty with this business of spanking.

The violence between---like there were fistfights. Young males butting their horns just like every other animal butts their horns in every other phase of this planet. There were rites of passage. When I first got there, there was an epidemic of spray-painting. It wasn't organized like this junk that's out now. They would write words, like they wrote F-O-K. Now I looked at that word, and I looked at that word, and I knew what they were trying to say, but I thought, I can't believe anybody thinks that's the way you spell it. (Laughs) So we apprehended the culprit, and I had a long talk with this kid, and I told him, "You know, I don't mind you using that word. But the thing that really bothers me, if you can't spell it, boy, don't write it." (MK laughs.)

"What are you talking about?"



"That's F-U-C-K, not F-O-K."

"Not!"

"Right."

"Not!"

"Right." So I had to get to the *Dictionary of American Slang*, has F-U-C-K.

He said, "Oh, a Haole said that, anyway."

I said, "That's right, that's right. You're absolutely right. But this is the way it's spelled. Now if you can't spell a word, don't show everybody how dumb you are (MK laughs) by going out and writing it on that."

Well, I thought it was really a real laugh, until I was talking to Joe Blaylock. We were contemporaries, and very good friends. He says, "Well, you think that's bad." He says, "At the rest rooms at the University [of Hawai'i] (laughs) it's spelled the same way."

I said, "You're kidding." (Laughs) You don't know how bad off these kids are. And another one. S-H-E-A-T. Sheat [i.e., shit]. (Chuckles) Oh, that's funny, funny, funny.

Well, got on top of that, but there were only a few kids who were angry and doing it, so catch 'em and make 'em come wash it off, that's that. Didn't vandalize the buildings, you know. But that stuff was occasional, you know, it would be spray-painted. After the DSS and H [Department of Social Services and Housing] moved in downstairs, some of the workers' cars got spray-painted very purposely. And you know, I tried to tell them, "They're picking you because [of] your doing. Stop and think about who is it you're having a real problem with, and the kids are involved." But anyway, they'd break into the soda machine on occasion, and the ice cream machine, particularly the ones out by the gym that were far from anybody at night.

Fights between young men, fights between—well, they had clubs. Lorin had organized clubs. He was a great group worker, 'cause he had organized all these clubs. There would be feelings between them, but they wouldn't fight between them. Maybe off incidently, but not as a group. The biggest kind of fighting happened between housing. The Kūhiō [Park] Terrace was just being built, and it was Kūhiō Homes, okay, and Pālolo [Valley Housing]. They had a running, running, running argument. And how they would fight is that the guys from Kūhiō would go up to Pālolo and they would tip over their cars, turn 'em upside-down. And then they'd come down. They didn't have cars, they'd do something else, anyway, right? But I mean it was like that. And if words got really bad, and Mayor Wright [housing residents] fought with Kūhiō [residents]. KPT [Kūhiō Park Terrace] and Mayor Wright used to be monster battlers, and they would agree to meet, and then they would fight. And they would fight in bunches. That was totally for identity, superiority, "Ours is better than yours," "We're the best," it's the world series, whatever, right?

One time we had a terrible war between KPT and Mayor Wright, down across the street from Mayor Wright, like on the corner of Liliha. Oh, maybe there were forty kids or fifty, I mean,

young men. These were not kids. This was going up to twenty, twenty-five years old. And had to call a million cops and everything, right? And in those days, the result of that would be maybe a little broken nose or two, some cuts, bunch of bruises, piles of bruises, and that's it. I mean, they were fists. They were fists. They didn't bring even knives. If you look at the ethnic composition of Mayor Wright and Kūhiō Park Terrace, you can see that the knives didn't come in until later. This was just fists. And so talk about gang fights and trying to equate it, well maybe it's just that they didn't have the weapons. I guess they didn't. Another one, that they were fighting for something different. There wasn't any money. They weren't making money. They weren't selling dope, they weren't doing any of those things. It was just pride. The have-nots trying to find some way to be proud of themselves.

Then the Samoans came, and that was a really, really and one and a half. Because they came in and they—I don't know. DSS and H just dumps them by the loads at KPT and some in Mayor Wright, but mostly in KPT. And these folks were from Apia, [Western Samoa] and there. They never even saw a flush toilet. They put 'em into a high-rise with an elevator with balconies. So right away, they broke everything. I mean, the elevators were broken, so then everybody's mad. The rest of the population is mad at those "dirty, dumb Samoans."

Well, at Pālama, it took a different kind of route. They were young men, Samoans, wanted to come across the street and use the gym and come to the dances and like that. But it was basically a Hawaiian, part-Hawaiian populace at Pālama at that time. That was the majority of the population. And that [Pālama Settlement] was theirs. Though they didn't have much. (Laughs) But what they had was theirs, and they didn't want any Samoans to come over. One night we had a big dance, a sock hop, big dance, maybe a thousand people at the dance. The Samoan young men decided to come to the dance.

That did it. We had World War IV. We had this big monster fight out in the parking lot. Samoans are noted for throwing rocks. That's their trademark in the world (chuckles) is throwing rocks and using sticks. The Hawaiians loved beer bottles. So we had this big war. I spent the war—I went out, I was gonna do something about it. I was at the dance, right? So I got out to the car of another worker, and I'm trying to talk sense. But the Hawaiians that I knew, all the boys that were called the Ali'i, they were all drunk as skunks and angry, and if you ever try to talk to a drunk nineteen or twenty year old, (laughs) no, no, no, they put you back. And the Samoans, I didn't know. They're over here, they were picking up the pavement, busting it up and using it to throw. The cars were all getting smashed because they were throwing, not at the cars, they were throwing at the other guys. The Ali'is were with broken beer bottles after the Samoans. Oh, it was terrible. Maybe it was fifty or sixty. Oh, half of the police force was there that night. Oh, really, really. And off to the hospital with more severe-kind of wounds—head with rock gashes, cuts from the broken bottle, and they threw the bottles, broken arms and like that. But all healable stuff. I mean nobody was gonna suffer life damage or anything. That was the worst fight I saw. I think it was the worst fight they ever had there, but it was a doozy, 'cause it lasted for at least two hours. They just went on and on, they couldn't stop them.

(Taping interrupted, then resumes.)

**MK:** You just told me about one of the huge fights that occurred at Pālama Settlement during a dance. I was wondering, what did you do at times like that and after that?

EP: Well, like the fight with the Samoans, well, any of the fights, you try to break the fight up, to stop it. If it's bigger than you can handle, you call the police. Without question, you call the police and get them to stop it. Then, the next day, you get the people involved with the best negotiators that you have and get them in and try to talk to find out what caused the fight, how they feel about it now, whether they're gonna continue after they talk to you, go out and bust 'em up again. So the Samoan issue left us kind of that way, because we didn't know the right thing to do. I didn't know the right thing, and nobody did. Lorin didn't know either.

That brought about two things—it told us we don't know anything about the neighborhood anymore, don't know everything. So we hired Vaiao Alailima and his wife Fay. But Fay was working up at Kamehameha School, and Vaiao was at East-West Center. She had written her book *My Samoan Chief*. They were badly in need of money because they had a family. So we hired them to do a survey of the Samoan families in our neighborhood, number one. Find out who's in the neighborhood. Then I asked Vaiao, "What do you do? How do you approach it?" He told me about the *matai* system, and who the *matai* were that were local, and which families they represented, yeah? So that if there was a problem, I'd know who to contact, right? He told me very much, "Don't go to the families, no, no, no, no, no. That won't get you anywhere. You contact the *matai*, and he will take care of it." Well that was really backwards from the way—I was always one on one, we'll solve it ourselves. No, no, no, no, no, Samoans you don't do that at all. So that's how we went ahead with that one.

The thing is that the ethnic makeup of the area had changed really radically between '64, '63 and when the first big bunch of Samoans came in in the late [19]60s, probably '67 or '66. In those few years, that's when you had this mass influx from Samoa, right? Mayor Wright, when I first got here, was predominantly Hawaiian, part-Hawaiian mixed, a lot of Puerto Rican, chop suey. Mostly all chop suey. The Japanese in the area lived Waipā Lane, down to Liliha, down by the Japanese[-language] school there [i.e., Pālama Gakuen], and down like all of the lanes, like Pālama Street. Those little houses? Those were all privately owned by older Japanese. By the time I got there, they were elderly. Their sons and daughters were off at university, but they still were on the little family place that they owned, right? There were hardly any Koreans. Koreans were an unknown factor. Filipinos, they didn't live in housing. They lived in these planned groups, this housings, their own, big one, Sing Loy Lane right behind what used to be the settlement football field, but then those houses left, they were, okay. And then across the street by Likelike School, that whole area in there, Lopez Lane, all those lanes was just like miniature Philippines. They swept the ground, the chickens were parked out in front, just like you were in the Philippines. That was where the Filipino groups came from.

[Kalihi] War Homes were basically almost all Hawaiians, part-Hawaiians. Then became the Samoans and (laughs) that caused a lot of trouble. KPT had really awful wars 'cause there were so many involved. Mayor Wright didn't have that many to begin with. Now they have more, but they didn't at that time. So the ethnic makeup of the neighborhoods was—you knew where people were, right?

And the age, when I got there—I hate to quote the number—but it was like more than half of the people, well over half the people, were under age nineteen. In fact, there was a poet a long time ago whose name was Don Blanding, a Haole who got enamored of Hawai'i. And he wrote a poem, one of his poems was called "Baby Street." That was Pālama Street he was writing about. Millions of babies. Piles of babies. Piles of young people. That's changed now.

Totally different makeup from that. But that was what it was then.

**MK:** You know, given the ethnic mix of that area, and what you said earlier about when you used to hire people, did you make it a practice, then, to make sure you had some people who were familiar with the Samoan culture? Like you had the Alailimas who did the survey and everything. Were most of the workers that worked with you at Pālama Settlement part-Hawaiian, Hawaiian ancestry to deal with this situation?

**EP:** Well, you gotta go back there. We weren't dealing with that situation then, remember? This wasn't a hot-button number. In fact, we weren't even thinking it was that important, right? You gotta go back to where the thoughts were. When you had a vacancy and you advertised and then the people came in, first of all, they had to be qualified. That just threw away two-thirds, nine-tenths of the people you were talking about, particularly the Hawaiians, and then the Samoans, okay.

Now you're going to think I'm really terrible, but another part that had to play was when I first got to Pālama, the group work, now. Now group work and recreation are the parts that dealt most closely with the people, day by day by day. It's what they came for. And we had (chuckles)—really, the people are still there. You had Lorin, who was a Haole, but he was an outdoor Haole. But he was always a Haole, and they would always consider him that. But he was acceptable because he'd been there so long, and his family, he only knew Hawai'i.

Heading up group work, we had George Fujioka. You know George? Well, I think he's the number three boss in the Department of Health now. (Chuckles) Nice guy. Tiny little Japanese guy. Nice, very proper. The first thing I saw happening when I walked down the hall in Pālama that I noticed about George was there's a bunch of—the Ali'is were the bullies of the world. They were the oldest group, and they were bad asses. They thought they were really *tantaran*, right? Anyway, they wanted George to open the billiards room. It wasn't the time to open the billiards room. So he had said no, he needed another half hour, whatever. Two of these big guys, they came real close to him, had him up against the wall, just intimidating the heck out of him. Now, they didn't hit him. But they had him spitless. He was so scared, he had turned green. (Chuckles) His eyes were like this, 'cause these two big, muscle-bound [guys] were pressing him right up against the wall. He says, "Oh well, you'll be responsible, right? I can trust you, right?" And he opens the door. I'm thinking what are we saying?

Then I looked at the rest of the staff, and we have the same picture. Bullies were running the world, 'cause the neighborhood's full of these big bullies. They didn't have anything, but they had Pālama, right? They ran Pālama. (Laughs) Now they didn't run Lorin, and they didn't bully him. He was in a case all by itself. Because most of the time, they figured Lorin's out in the woods, 'cause he was, teaching them about everything. They called him Kink, you know, there was a comic strip a long time ago about the Katzenjammer Kids or something. Kink was one of them. Well, anyway, that's what he told me.

The image was the first thing that I saw had to go. We have to tell the people who we are first. We got to listen to what they want, right? We got to get together. But you cannot do anything. I went back to my lessons from Olive Rafferty in the second grade. There's thirty of them, and there's one of you. If you wanted anybody to learn anything, somebody's got to be boss. Okay, so I figured this image has to change.



Well, my first venture into image changing was I changed the program around. [Had] to hire a head of this youth development section, the key, the hub of where we were going. Among the applicants was a guy in grad school. I interviewed him, and his name was Kenneth Ling, football player, tough boy, smart boy, really, really full of abilities. So I had written some programs and gotten them funded—remember, this was the land of milk and honey. Federal money was easy to get. And this was through the family court. We tied real close up with the family court. This one was gonna be an outreach program, to reach the ones who didn't come over and play, whatever. But then they had to be over in Mayor Wright, right? They had to walk around, they had to be seen. Now they can't be any little—George is sweet, but they couldn't be any little George Fujioka. Because if you looked at what were the values of the people living there, strength was the primary value that there was. They didn't have money, so money wasn't a value. They didn't have any property, they were in [public] housing. So what they did have was physical strength, and it was the worshipping stone of all of the neighborhoods. That was the one thing that everybody respected. So you had to have an image of strength, physical strength.

Hired Kenneth. Oh, the delight of my life, Kenneth Ling. But he had to have a partner. So I had to go to a seminar in Chicago. At the seminar, they have the slave market downstairs where you go look to see who there is available. I ran into this guy from Los Angeles, a Haole, though. He had been a cop, he'd been a professional boxer and had a degree in English literature and something else. It was Mickey Hummer. I really liked him. I could really see him—even though he was a Haole—because of his other reputations. His wife was an actress, a TV actress, Kathleen.

So they were coming over here for vacation. Anyway, so I set up an interview with Kenneth, 'cause that would be his partner, right? They hit it off, they hit it off, amazing how they hit it off. Well, Mickey had this sense of humor that was unbelievable. I had to fire him in the end, (laughs) but anyway. But I hired Mickey. Then during the summer, I hired Wayne Matsuo, who was at that time really big into judo and stuff, right? Very physical. I mean, muscles on his muscles. (Chuckles) When they walked over into Mayor Wright, they occupy the whole sidewalk when they walk, right? It's like our gang was visiting their gang, right? (Laughs) And things began to change. The way who talked to who, how they talked to who, right? Because the basic level of respect in the neighborhood was strength. That's the easiest one. You could earn others' respect, but the one that everybody recognized, right off through every family, everything, was strength. So that did a lot toward shaping success.

Then I thought the big gap was—they'd never get anywhere until they had the skills to work in society, education. Education had no value in the neighborhood. It wasn't important to anybody, because nobody ever succeeded. Because that's just what happened to me, too. Plus [how they] looked [at] reading. They didn't need to read. Nobody read. They didn't take the newspaper. They didn't have books. They didn't have magazines. Send the kids to the store, the kids only knew the labels of the thing they were buying. They didn't know what it said. So how are they supposed to---and the games they played: pool, shot dice, craps, *paiute*, trumps, that's it. What do you need to read? You don't. You need numbers, but you don't need to read. So didn't surprise me, they didn't read well. Now how are we gonna get them to read well when they don't think it's important? They think it's a bunch of trash. Well, what did we have that they thought was important? I don't know if you've gotten the history of barefoot football [in Hawai'i]. Football was always the big thing. Synonymous with Pālama was football. So we had Pop Warner football going. But at that time, Pop Warner football, I



thought, was in a terrible disarray because the coaches would come and drink beer and all this stuff. Ah, I was still prissy, a little bit prissy. I didn't think that was the way coaches ought to be on the field. But here's Kenneth, ex football player.

But I thought we need a bigger draw than that. I had known by way of another person a former Detroit Lion football player who married a Haole social worker in Detroit, and had had big trouble during the riots and stuff. Their life was just terrible. He was playing behind [Dick] "Night train" Lane, who was so good, he'd never get to be first string. His ankles were too weak anyway, so he wasn't gonna be long for the pros. So he had come over here, and the YMCA [Young Men's Christian Association] Kalihi [branch] had hired him as an outreach worker. But I saw more value than that. That was John Sharp. So I said, "This guy has the charisma. This guy has the ability, he has the reputation. I think this guy is a pied piper."

## END OF SIDE ONE

## SIDE TWO

MK: Okay, you were just talking about John Sharp.

EP: John Sharp, right. So I wanted to hire him. I did hire him. Then I had this idea. I'd written this program out—I had used Kenneth to bounce it off of and stuff. If we absolutely held on to our football team, that's just what the kids wanted. [So] we said, "There's only one way you can get to our football team," and we set down our rules for how you're gonna get to the football team. Our rules would be, you come, first thing you do is you have a physical, and you go to the dental clinic and you do whatever they tell you. Recognizing the kids didn't eat properly, we will provide a training table like all teams have that's athletically proper at dinner. "Now I want you to read." But this time, I had gone on another job where I saw this for the first time, the Program Instructional Learning Center, where there was no people. It was operated first out of Draper Prison, where we went, by John McKee. Dr. John McKee [was] coming over here and helping me get it started, and he did. Anyway, but I wanted to take the football stuff, that the kids were interested in, but there were no professionally done programs. So Kenneth and I wrote the first ones. Kenneth would tell me the play, he'd tell me a twenty-two pull right or whatever, and then I said, "What is that?"

Then he says, "This guy has to go here and has to go here." Then I would write down, "has to go here, has to go there, then you la la la la," and make it on little three-by-five-[inch] cards. Reading lessons, okay? The kids had to go to the learning center [to learn to read]. Right away after that, it hit big, the program instructional stuff, and then stuff became available, like SRA [Science Research Associates, Inc.] and stuff like that. So they would have to go to learning center every day. They were individually programmed as to their abilities. We tested them on the SAT beforehand. That was the Stanford Achievement [Test], not the other one.

So anyhow, they would have to go to the learning center right after school every day. They would have to do their stuff at 90 percent correct. If they did that every day, they got a chit that they took down to the locker room, and they got their practice uniform, and they could practice that day, right? If they didn't do it at all, they wouldn't get any chit. But if they got it at 70 percent or 80 percent, then they could only practice two-thirds or a third or half or

whatever like that. Then if you had five of these practice chits, you would be guaranteed that you would play on Saturday. If you had only two or three, you would get to play only a little bit or whatever. Equal, equal, equal, equal. Absolutely behavior modification.

And the obvious was, who will enforce this? The hardest part. Easiest part was writing it. Who to enforce it. So I hired John Sharp. Bought into the program. Kenneth thought—he'd helped develop the program. He bought into it with words at first. But anyway, no more volunteer staff. Had to be our own staff. 'Cause the only way I could control that they had to do this stuff was their paycheck. It wasn't whether they wanted to, 'cause they surely didn't want to. They wanted the stars to play all the time no matter what. This had to go. That even meant if your star quarterback on the championship game was ineligible, he didn't play. That happened to us right out of the bat. It happened in the first year.

But then to the kids I sold this lovely story of you do all these things? You can play on Pālama's team. There was no grading by the ability to play. You had to keep these rules even if you were rocking as a player. On top of that, then, you practice hard and you win your division, okay? You win your division, and I'll guarantee you, make you a bargain, game on the outside islands. As a reward, right? Plus they all had a big banquet every year for everybody who finished, and we took them down Waikīkī. Top drawer, places they never saw in their life. And then I said, "And you know what?" in a fit of stupidity. (Laughs) "If you guys win the state, you win your outside [island] game, you win the state, you can go to the Mainland to play." (MK laughs.) We don't have two cents. We don't have anything. I make the promise. The kids all bought it. They think this is wonderful.

Furthermore, now there's the Pop Warner team down in Kalākaua, one up in Kalihi Valley, you just go and go try. You don't have to do anything, right? This, you have to do all this stuff, all this stuff: doctor, food, dentist, school. Oh, and you had to go to school every day, too, incidentally. We monitored that. Then it became obvious that we had the need for an awful lot of people that I could trust. I could handle staff, I thought, (laughs) by the fact they worked there. This is a condition of your working, you're going to do it this way. But all this stuff, the kids had to be individually tested. They had to be individually programmed. They had to be individually monitored. Takes a million hands, right?

By this time, Jack [Nagoshi had left Pālama Settlement for a position] at the university. I went up to the university and started recruiting students, volunteers. Went to the military, recruit volunteers. The general public, anybody. But they mostly came out of the university and the military, most of our volunteers. We called those our academic coaches. 'Cause you got to remember, the kids do not like school. They do not like school, they do not like teachers, they don't like those words, right? So those are all right. They wore shirts that said "Coach" on 'em. (Laughs)

Okay, then the food part became a real point, 'cause it got expensive, 'cause we don't have any money. You know, this is going on a shoestring.

Oh, and the old Pālama teams wore all kind of junk uniforms, 'cause they usually took the hand-me-downs from Farrington [High School] JV [Junior Varsity], cracked helmets, all this stuff. They had to go steal their shoes, and they always stole 'em from the teams. (Chuckles) So I said, "No, if you're going to say you're good, you're going to change this entire approach. You're going to give these kids the best there is, top drawer, whatever it is, top

drawer." That sold, because the board, everybody, recognized that your image to yourself, a lot is picked up from wherever you have to live, however your clothes, whatever your are. Other people got lots and you got nothing.

So you know, we went and bought Ridell helmets, bought the best uniforms going. They got really terrible—AUW [Aloha United Way] got this big, big letter from this guy in Kailua who wrote and said, "How dare you be spending the AUW [funds] on expensive Ridell helmets for the kids at Pālama Settlement. My kid plays Pop Warner, and he doesn't afford that kind."

Being sassy, my response was, "I don't quite understand your reasoning. You value your child's brain the way you do, and I'll value the brains of the children at Pālama the way I do. Thank you, sir. Glad you're interested." He didn't gripe anymore, but a lot of people did. But we went that way, anyway. Top drawer.

The food. If you want a good diet, it's expensive. That's why they don't have it at home. How we gonna get the good diet? First of all, enlisted the parents, fathers and mothers. And how we got fathers to come to our meetings, don't serve milk and cookies, [serve] beer and stew. Private property, we can do what we want to. They can't tell us we can't serve beer. But you're gonna ask a man to come out and spend the evening, give him two cookies and a little cup of tea or something? What would happen? So we had meetings. We called it the booster club. We served dinner, big pot of stew and rice, and beer. We got a big constituency, a big, solid group of parents who really wanted—'cause they wanted something to do, too. But where the food's coming from, (laughs) that's another problem.

Patsy Mink had gotten us into the program with the surplus food. Okay, that's good. And the money for milk. But then the dairy started playing fast and loose with the money, because on that bill, it said you had to buy fresh milk. Couldn't buy recombinant milk, although it's nutritionally just as good. So they hung us up paying for those little cartons, which spent the money awful fast. We couldn't even buy bulk milk, yeah? Anyway, still, vegetables. Fish, we could come by, because the parents would fish. Meat; fresh vegetables was the big one, fresh vegetables and fresh fruit. Expensive items, expensive items. Well, on our board at that time was a wonderful, wonderful man whose name was Auggie Yee. August Yee, he owned Holiday Mart. A wonderful man. His wife was a social worker. But he was really, really great. He was on our board. He gave us all of our fruits and vegetables, carte blanche.

Well, we had this wonderful woman in charge of the kitchen who worked for us who was head of another project of mine, Annie Kainoa. She died a couple of years ago. But she could take two little things and make a feast out of 'em, and it tasted good. She knew all of the Y. Hata [& Co. Ltd.] people and C.Q. Yee Hop [& Co., Ltd.] people. She could go down there and get things that were [damaged], she'd get the stuff. Then we got the mothers and fathers to sign up to serve and cook, cook and serve. Annie over the head of them, cooked and served for the training table, right. So there we had parent involvement. Only some of them weren't parents. I made a couple big mistakes saying, "Oh, your daddy," and it wasn't the daddy, it was the mother's new boyfriend. But I mean. . . . (Chuckles) So I quit saying, "Your daddy." (Laughs) I just said, "Oh, John," or whoever. So there we had that group.

Well this program was so wonderful. It got really refined. The learning center got really—and it's still operational—it's really refined. The things that happened to the kids who were in this program, they made me so happy. I could give you a list of where they are. It's just that you

talk to them. One of the best ones that I can think of right now, he's a federal marshal right now, Fituina Tua. He went through College Opportunities [Program], which is also another conduit out that way, another connection. But really, really great.

Kenneth coached the midgets, and John coached the bantams, the big boys. It was the big boys John appealed to, because he was a Black, flashy, (chuckles) big Afro at the time. His friends were---Kareem Abdul-Jabbar stayed with him, was his buddy, he'd come. Ernie Shivers, the fighter. Muhammed Ali came, all to Pālama, 'cause they were John's friends. So that program got all kinds of awards. It got national awards by the American Psychological Association, it got all kinds of awards, and it should have, as long as it was pure, but if you messed with it. . . .

The one place that you would tip it is the fact that you could not go even one half step off from the fact that the requirements are absolutes. They're absolutes. No excuse, no reasons, no nothing. Don't tell me you were sick. Well, if you come and you got a doctor's certified thing, maybe that would do for that day. But don't just say, "I stayed home 'cause I was sick." Staff's biggest problems were wanting to help the individual kid. I know they didn't really mean it. I know they really wanted to try hard. I know, well, "They only got 60 percent, but they could have." And the wooing of the academic coaches and the football coaches by the kid was infamous. 'Cause kids are so smart. (Chuckles) You know, they're so manipulative. They know the way to the adult, they get into a relationship. They know right away what to say to please. So it was hard to make people be hardhearted. 'Cause they loved the kids. That's why they were there. They'd say, "Oh, well, this is really important, and if he doesn't play, he may go away, and we're going to lose this opportunity."

So that was hard. But during my stay, it stayed on target. We had some really scary times, like I didn't know if I could trust John. (Chuckles) Because he got---the first year, I didn't think we were gonna win anything, because we had the leftovers. I thought all of the good players would go up to these teams where they don't have to do anything but go practice, and be a big shot. Instead, found out something funny. The harder we made it to get in, the better and the more kids wanted it. (MK chuckles.) The same reward with no work, no, they didn't want that one. Every time we added a layer of stuff on it, more kids would come. (Chuckles) More kids would come. And of course the parents were very eager by this time, because they liked the results. They liked the fact that Junior was achieving and being a hero. They liked the fact that he was getting better grades. They liked the fact that he wasn't being reported by the principal or the housing people, yeah?

So that was cool. But the first year, I didn't think we'd win anything. 'Cause here, I thought we would have the ragtag of the bunch, the ones that nobody else would take. Instead, we ended up playing in the championship game for O'ahu. The night before the game, our quarterback sniffed glue and got loop legged. And the coach knew it, and I knew it. But I knew the coach knew it. But I didn't say anything, 'cause I didn't know---"It's now or never, John. You're gonna live by what you say? Or are you gonna go back to your coachly self and make an excuse?" 'Cause I thought he was going to say he knew it was some good excuse. But he knew I was watching him.

(Laughter)

EP: The next day, came time to go for the game, and he didn't even let him go in the truck with



the players. Played a second-string, left-handed quarterback—I will never forget that game—who really wasn't very good, and hadn't played that very. . . . He was playing as an end. He wasn't that good as a quarterback. And we beat the socks off of Pālolo. (Laughs) That's the proof by fire. "John, if you had played that kid, your butt would have been out of here that fast," 'cause I was scared to death this was gonna happen. I was really scared when it came to it. 'Cause the coachly desire part and the other part. Just like with Kenneth [Ling]. We went into the same things, where his coachly self would take one turn, and his social work self was over here. It's hard 'cause they're two different desires.

So we made it. But then here we are, and we don't have any money to go on the trip, right? So I went out to hustle, and we put on sales, we sold lots of stuff. We made it. The first trip we took was to San Diego, and we played the California Pop Warner champions. It was a team that was sponsored by the police department. Now this was funny, because we'd have to live home-in-home, because we didn't have any money. So having the kids go at all was more money than we had. And [stayed] in the houses of policemen, Haole policemen. Oh my goodness. Kids didn't like policemen. Right away, that was a given. (MK laughs.) They were not fond of the law, okay? And the Haole policemen was even worse. (Laughs)

But it was a good experience. We lost that game on the Mainland. One of our boys, Wayne, what was his last name? Anyway, Wayne, gorgeous boy. Anyway, he was a good little boy from Pearl City, he'd come in. Broke his leg. I'll never forget it. We're playing in old Balboa Stadium in San Diego. It was the biggest thing they had at that time. He got his leg broken. And to get your leg broken away from home and everything, it was awful. . . . I went in the ambulance with him, I was so scared for him. He was fine. (Laughs)

But so it grew from that. It went on the next year, we were even more successful. We went to San Diego twice. We went to San Bernadino twice or so. We went to---then the biggies, we went to North Carolina, Fort Bragg. Then we went to Annapolis, Maryland. That was the one, I didn't realize how much the plane fare was to Maryland. When I accepted the game, I went to Kenneth and I says, "Guess where we're going? I took the game in Maryland."

Kenneth, being a Ling, says, "You did what?"

I said, "Yeah, the kids'll play in Annapolis. Wonderful, great, what an experience. We'll come back through Washington D.C., and they'll see the capitol (MK laughs), and we'll do all this good stuff."

He says, "Yeah. What in the hell are we gonna use for money."

I said, "Oh, money. Oh, that's okay. We'll get it. We got it all the time. We'll get it. Don't worry, don't worry." I'm thinking the other trips—like the one to Fort Bragg, we'd had army help with. Now, we had forty-five people, okay. Forty-five kids plus the staff, right? Pushed it up to lower fifty people, plane fare. And I called Western [Airlines]. Well, first I called everybody. I found out it was going to be around \$50,000. (Laughs) This was no hotels, no nothing, right? No food. Oh my goodness. So it turned out the neighborhood, the parents gotta sell everything. They had a booth at the swap meet. We sold, we collected---those days, they would pay for [empty] beer bottles. So couple of kids' mothers worked in hotels down in Waikīkī, took the truck down and would pick up the beer bottles from the bars at Waikīkī. Truckload after truckload after truckload, every night, of beer bottles, right? Okay, had those.



Well, we sold all of the ordinary things like candy and Portuguese sausage. We sold everything in the world that was sellable.

In the meantime, on our board was Cec Heftel. He liked the program because it was behavioral. So he said—he also owned a big share of Western Airlines. So he told me, “Now I will tell you this, but I don’t want you to tell it to anybody, not even to Kenneth. You work and you get as much as you can, and if there’s a deficit between what you’ve earned and the price of the ticket, you let me know, and I’ll personally—not as a board member—I personally will just make it up.” So I had that in my hip pocket.

Well, he came to the settlement one night to meet with Lorin, I guess. I was in my office, the windows were all open, and it was like eleven o’clock at night. I had my head down on my desk, ’cause I had come to the end of the road. I couldn’t face the kids and tell them we can’t go, right? That was when he came in and said, “What’s the matter? What you working so late for?”

Then I told him, “I’m afraid we’re not going to make it. I’ve done everything I can think of. It’s more money than I thought.” I said, “Ken told me it would be a bunch, but I just—it was such a good experience.” Anyway, that was when he told me that.

Then I had another thought. The stock market. You know how you buy stock, there’s blue chip and there’s common stock? So I got a pamphlet from one of the stockbrokers, how they advertise, and I duplicated it and made up a list of all of the rich, rich, rich, athletically inclined kamaainas. (MK chuckles.) The Dillinghams and everybody. And I wrote these letters so that “You’re being offered a special opportunity, one of a select group to buy into, you can own your own football player. You can own your own player on a championship team.” And the stocks with the blue chip, you could own the player, you pick the player, right? And that was a \$500 buy. If you wanted common stock, we’d pick the player. That’s \$250. And if you wanted to join in a *hui* and own in combo, up to at \$100 and five of you would own the person. Then if the player goes to school every day and does all this stuff and his grades improve you get this reward. If he does this, you get this as a reward. It went from like desk sets to decals for your car to a tee shirt.

(Laughter)

EP: I mailed them out. Oh, and I sent ’em---the thing was I had to take pictures of all the kids. But I told John, and he got terribly upset. He’s Black. This took him back to slavery, where people were being sold. He says, “I just don’t like the idea of you selling my players.”

I said, “Well, do you like the idea (laughs) of going?”

He said, “Oh, yeah.”

I says, “Well, do you like the idea of you’ll have to sell”—and I had it worked out—“four thousand pounds of Portuguese sausage in the next two months?” or whatever. “Do you like that idea?” Well, he didn’t like that idea.

I says, “Well, what’s the difference? All the big pro players are owned. I mean, what the hell. You’re talking slavery. I know, it’s like that. But hey, bottom-line, do you want to go or not?”

So when he took it to the kids, he told them—some of them said the same thing: “I don’t wanna be bought.”

He says, “Okay, you don’t wanna be bought. You wanna go sell four thousand pounds worth of Portuguese sausage.”

“No, no, sell me, sell me.”

So, we did. We sold them. And believe it or not, I made \$7,000 on selling the kids.

(Laughter)

EP: Yeah, in fact, one of them—was this really funny that. . . . Which Dillingham was it? The one that just died not too long ago. Anyway, he called me. His kid was the quarterback at the time he had picked, and he had wanted, so I sent him a desk set, a Pālama desk set. It cost thirty dollars, right? So he called me and said, “You know, I really appreciate it, but I wish you’d take it and spend the money on somebody else.”

I said, “You know, I gotta tell you something that really hurts me. I know it would hurt the kid,” whose name was Aaron Malia, “because this is saying, ‘You’re not good enough.’ ‘I’ve worked for you, and what I’ve earned for you isn’t good enough for you to take. But I can take from you, and I’m suppose to feel not ashamed. But I work hard for you, and you won’t take what I earn.’”

He says, “Oh, I didn’t mean that.”

I said, “That’s the way the kids will see it. The kids have a right to think they’ve given back to their benefactor, their owner, something of value that’s not like a decal, big deal.”

So he said, “I didn’t mean it that way. I apologize.”

I said, “No, no. If they make a bargain, and they’ve earned for you, then please take it. (Laughs) You can throw it away, I don’t care. I know you don’t want it. But the issue is they’ve gotta know they gave you back something, right?” One of the sad ones of that, you know Judge Lum, Herman Lum? He was head of family court at that time.

(Taping is interrupted, then resumes.)

MK: Okay, you were just talking about Herman Lum.

EP: Yep. Well, Herman Lum wanted to buy a player, and so he picked a player, and he picked one of our best running backs. Unfortunately, the player that he picked didn’t turn out very good. After the program, he became a bank robber. And he made me most angry because he held up the American Security Bank at Liliha and Vineyard, and he was wearing a Pālama jacket. In the police picture, you know? They came and said, “Who is this kid?”

I said, “Oh, no. [He] might at least have worn something that didn’t bring it back to Pālama. So they weren’t all happy stories, they way they ended. But you can’t win ’em all. You can only do what you can do.

MK: Percentagewise, overall, what do you think the results are from that program?

EP: From that program, I would say that 25 percent really far exceeded—like we had [kids on] scholarship to Punahou, then out to college, and the kids that were [on] scholarship to St. Louis. I mean, and then on to college and into jobs of, not importance, but substantial jobs. Straight jobs and good jobs. We ran into one [graduate] at the airport. Joe had coached one of the teams. Was Jason Pang, the captain of the Wackenhut guards down at the airport. Well, I mean, you know, what the heck. I think 60 to 70 percent aren't in jail, let's put it that way, and are holding down jobs at places; they're not on welfare. Maybe 15, 20 percent—are lost. They're either dead or in jail.

MK: And then what was the name of this project? (EP laughs.) Did it go under a particular name?

EP: It was just the football project, the Pālama project [i.e., Pākōlea project]. The kids were the name. Then we branched it off into basketball, too. Because after football season, to keep going. It was good with basketball, too.

I went to one of their games not too long ago. They've gone to [using] total volunteers and everything, and coaches bringing cases of beer to the games, and the language, and they were all ragtag again, and now they even make the kids buy their football equipment. They don't have any money to buy the football equipment. All of the other teams, the regular, middle-class teams, you buy your own stuff. They go through the motions of the learning center, but it isn't real. And that really—I cried. I went to a football game and cried. Can you believe that? I watched the kids and I [thought], "Oh, no." You know, better just throw it away and just have the football team again. Don't pretend as though you're doing those things when you're not. But budget cuts. Biggest thing, loss of the personnel who were there. See, Kenneth left when I went. John left with me to Job Corps. The connection of getting volunteer coaches got harder and harder. Getting to work harder and harder and harder to get people to volunteer that much time. You had to ask them for a commitment of ten weeks. So it got harder and harder, and it just went down the drain.

One of the other places we went was, besides the fiasco in Maryland—but we got there, we got there. I guess it was the very first one, San Diego, the kids didn't have any clothes, they didn't have anything to go to the Mainland. Governor [John A.] Burns was the governor. So I went to see the governor, and I said, "Now, these kids, almost all of them are on welfare. But the issue is these kids don't have underpants." I found that out the hard way. I didn't know the kids didn't have underpants. They don't have toothbrushes. They don't have a jacket. They don't have anything, and it's December. They don't have shoes, they don't have anything. I said, "Governor, if you want to send your team over there representing the state of Hawai'i bare-assed naked, then okay. But I don't think you want them to go over there representing the state. They're your state champions. Not their fault they don't have any money."

So he gave me—what was it? Five thousand dollars to buy clothes. Then I went down to Malia Sportswear. In those days—you probably don't remember these—but the tapa jackets, blazers, were real popular. Bought tapa jackets. Got 'em really, really, really cheap. White pants, white turtlenecks. Kukui-nut leis the parents made. Shoes. Underpants. Oh, they went off looking sharp. Down at the airport, every time we left with the team, people would say, "Well, what school do they go to?" Everybody thought they were some private school when we were getting on the airplane, 'cause they all were wearing such slick clothes. Every place we went,

they dressed really good. Of course, it took a lot of finagling to get the clothes. But of course other people, they only got tax write-offs anyway. I mean, what the heck.

So the governor gave us the first clothing boost. Then he fixed it so that we could get—through welfare, we could get some special clothing allowances on all of their things for the special trip. That helped.

One year, I was in a meeting, and I met a guy, a Chicano guy whose name was Cruz. We were at Las Vegas in a meeting. We were talking, and he said his wife was from the Zufii reservation in New Mexico. We're talking on about our project. He said, "We gotta do something like that," and all this good stuff. He said, "Why don't you come out and play?"

I said, "Oh, that's a good idea," like that. Anyway, he gave my name to the chief of the Zufii tribe, and the council met. They invited us to come for *Chavako*, which is the highest religious ceremony in the Zufii nation. They invited us to come that week and play their high school freshman team. They would be about the same age. I thought this is really cool. So I wrote back, and we talked on the phone. We did all this stuff and arranged. We're gonna go over for *Chavako*.

First of all, we said live home in home, right? Then he called back and said, "We had a tribal meeting, and we think it would be best for your players to not live in our homes. So we're going to put you up." The feds had built this juvenile hall, but they had never used it. It's brand new, built two years, and nobody had ever lived in it. Since they didn't need it—the government give them what they don't want, right?

Anyway, so at first I was like, "Wow, gonna put our kids in the jail. They don't want us to live with them I guess. I don't know about this." But anyway, we're already committed. What came down was, there's no heat in any of their homes. It was the dead of—actually, we were there in a blizzard. They were afraid the kids would get sick. Of course, most of them didn't have inside plumbing either. So they decided these Hawai'i kids might not be able to—and that was really very thoughtful. They didn't say that up front. I found that out later.

Then we got there, and the funniest part of that was—and we had arranged that the staff would all stay in Gallup outside of the reservation, sixty miles or whatever, in a motel and drive in every day. Except for the guys who slept with the kids, the coaches were with them and the support staff was there, the cheerleaders and the chaperons. So the funniest thing is though we get off the airplane and we get the bus from—Zufii comes to pick us up, takes us up to the thing, and they had prepared dinner, right? And I am the one who sticks out like a sore thumb. Right off the bat, I knew what was wrong. I was White. I was the only White one in our entourage. (MK laughs.) Bob Higashino was the director and he was with us, and I said, "Bob, in hot water." [Because EP has a Hawaiian surname] Piko, they didn't think I was White. These people never saw me, and Cruz never told them I was White, although he did tell them my husband was Hawaiian. But he didn't say I wasn't [Hawaiian]. (Laughs) So right off the bat, it was, Earlene, shut your mouth and go in the back. Go sit quietly someplace in the corner. So I did. I had to do that for that trip. Because it was very obvious that had I been the spokesperson, I had two strikes against me: I was White, and I was a woman. That was not the way to make it in Zufii, it's the tribal council.

It was a wonderful experience. It was unbelievable. They came out from the University of



New Mexico, and Chief Andrew had somebody who was on their like ethnic studies up there, and he came down, and he set the kids down, sat all of us down, and they gave us these sheets of paper and stuff explaining what *Chavako* is, and telling us what we could do and couldn't do and what is, where was it acceptable to be and where was acceptable not to be. And about its deep religious meaning. And why they had to do this was because they had had guests in the past, and they were White people, and they took pictures and movies and then went down and sold it, sold their religious pictures and rites to these bizarre kind of places. So no cameras were allowed, all this stuff. But it made real good sense, right? So they sat us down and gave us all that.

In the meantime, their kids, they fixed dinner for us in this brand-new facility. The worst thing was we got there and nobody even knew how to turn the water on. They had the key, but the water had never been turned on, 'cause nobody had ever used it. So the toilets couldn't work, there was no water, and nobody knew how to use it. So they had to call down to a plumber in Gallup, and he didn't get out till the next morning.

MK: Oh, no.

END OF INTERVIEW



Tape No. 27-27-4-97

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

with

Earlene Piko (EP)

Honolulu, O'ahu

May 22, 1997

BY: Michi Kodama Nishimoto (MK)

**MK:** This an interview with Mrs. Earlene Piko at her home in Honolulu, O'ahu on May 22, 1997, and the interviewer is Michiko Kodama-Nishimoto.

Okay, we're gonna continue our interview from the time you were at Pālama Settlement. You had started in 1963. And before we proceed, what was the title of your job, and how would you describe it, briefly?

**EP:** The title of the job at that time was program director. The job description was to read the Trecker Report and to observe in the neighborhood, and that's why I had the various tasks at the settlement, and to design programs to attack or approach the two most important areas. They both had to do with children and youth, okay. At that time, the settlement's focus was children and youth. We've talked about the Pākōlea Program and that approach, which was really an approach towards prevention. This was a program to meet the needs of children and basically we, as both the people who had made surveys and those of us who just thought we were imbued by some inalienable wisdom (laughs) felt that the key lay in keeping kids in school. That if they weren't in school, the possibilities for other behavior was magnified a hundred times, and it is. There are two worlds: they're either in the in world, or you're in the out world. You're in law, or you're out law. So the Pākōlea was designed as an attempt to maximize talents, keep kids in school—where they thought they didn't want to be—all that sort of stuff.

But now then the other part was actually this part. When they came, they came hand in hand. In 1964, family court notified us. We had this great number, a great number, maybe—what as this great number? Maybe there were thirty—paint sniffers. At that time, it was paint. You remember? They wanted to know if we would work with these paint sniffers. So I wrote a program called Akamai that had a medical component with Children's Hospital where they would have a physical, 'cause at that time, there was a great deal of question about what were the effects of paint sniffing. And I still had my heart believe that they should be learning in school. So those two, and food, together, and we had this small group. It was about twelve kids, twelve boys. The hard-core paint sniffers.

It was funded for two years. But at the end of the first year, I had an experience that turned my hair greyer. That was one of the kids that I thought had been one of our successes out of this story, I got a call at two o'clock in the morning. He was in detention home. He was high

on paint and had robbed the place, burglarized it. When I went right down, I was distraught. I said to the kid, "Why? You haven't sniffed in months. Why?"

He looked me right in the eye, and he said, "Eh, Earlene, if I didn't sniff paint, would you pay attention to me?"

Then I thought, "Oh, Lord." It was true. Have a program for paint sniffers, you'll get paint sniffers. So wrong, wrong, wrong. The program should be broader, should be bigger, shouldn't be specific, shouldn't depend on when they get a behavior [problem]. So I started trying to put together another program. At that time, I met Barry Rubin. He was a judge at family court. We became very good friends. And Herman Lum, the senior judge, also. And then they had hired Pat [Patrick] Yim, who was another judge who came on, and we made like a *hui*, right? I designed a program where—we named it "In-Community Treatment in lieu of Institutionalization."

Jack Nagoshi, in one of his parting moments (chuckles)—I think it was a trick. People were having all of this fit to build a bigger youth institution. They wanted bigger jails, you know, that story. But Governor [John A.] Burns had enough sense to know that wasn't where you put your money. But anyway, he formed this blue-ribbon committee to go to the Mainland and study youth correctional facilities. And this committee was made up of—oh, I forget his name, was at Kamehameha—oh, the Haole guy. Anyway, it'll come to me. The head of the youth facility, the head of he---the director of the court, Mary Jane Lee, and all of the leading heads, okay. There were only two nongovernmental agencies represented. One was Kamehameha Schools and the other one was Pālama Settlement. There were twenty-two people. Jack Nagoshi, in the meantime, had moved over to the youth center, which was handling the whole ball game, handling the money, it came out of a federal grant, all the things. So there were only two women out of the twenty-two: Mary Jane Lee, who was the director of the family court, and myself. Mary Jane and I had had kind of a long-running battle ever since I was at Pālama Settlement, and she thought I was some kind of a hussy, and I thought she was some kind of a stone-hearted, I-don't-know-what. I thought she had the statutes of the state of Hawai'i instead of a heart. Because everything was form. Everything was procedure. Oh, she was a very good director of the courts. But personally, we just didn't really get along. Every case that I came to her with, we always were in conflict. She didn't like the way I dressed. I didn't like the way she dressed. (Laughs) No, she dressed really conservatively, men-tailored suits, all this like that. I would wear the most gaudy, brightest earrings I could find.

(Laughter)

EP: Way out in left field. Anyway, I wanted to go on that trip, but I didn't want to be with Mary Jane. Then it dawned on me, all these men are together. I said to Jack Nagoshi, "Oh, I want to go bad, 'cause I want to go see and I want to learn. But I will not share a room with that woman."

He said, "Oh, you don't have to. You don't have to. I guarantee you," all this good stuff. Well, what happened was we took off and we went first to California, to a girls' school, Ventura School for Girls. That's where they were doing "I'm okay, you're okay." Reality therapy. So we stayed there two days. We saw reality therapy at work and all this good stuff. Then we went from there to Louisiana, to New Orleans. They have the Good Shepherd. It was a model program. No, no, no, before that, we went to Chino, Boys' Republic in California.

There we first saw guided group interaction. I fell in love with guided group interaction there. But we went on then to Louisiana.

Then from Louisiana, we went to Alabama. Draper Prison in Alabama. That's where I met John McKee who had the first program instructional learning center in the world. Told me it was developed there. In Alabama, fifteen-, fourteen-year-olds are put in adult prison. They don't have like a youth facility, okay? They're in open things. They don't have cells, even. It's a big cage, like, and the bunks are all in there. So they've got kids in with old, long-toothed wolves. The learning center was unbelievable. They had kids from Alabama who came into the program illiterate as sin. Oh, they were all Black, let's face it. There weren't anything but Black kids in their program. The program had been in operation like four years. By the time we got there, they had kids already working at and receiving associate degrees at junior college level from Tulane [University] and no lesser schools. I thought, "Wow."

That threw my whole thinking about learning centers. 'Cause the one thing that McKee said was do not connect the personality of the teacher with the client. Because of these badly, badly damaged young men. Their ego had taken a bigger battering than anything else, okay? This inability to do schoolwork and so forth was—every time they had to admit they could only work at a second grade level was another insult to their ego. So he felt that the teacher in this kind of a kid was an obstacle, not a help. So don't get him to like you. The more they like you, the harder it is for them to let you see how deficient they are. They would rather be perceived by you as being bad than being stupid. So I bought that. I still do believe it, incidentally. (Laughs) But I thought, "Hey, if they could take a Black kid, who's fourteen, who can't read "Humpty Dumpty," and in four years, he's over here doing junior college work, oh, the kids in Hawai'i could do tremendous."

So, well, we went there. We went from there to New York. From New York, we came back to Arizona, and came back. So it was a really fruitful trip. After that, I wrote [a grant proposal,] *In-Community Treatment in Lieu of Institutionalization*. This was in cooperation with Barry Rubin and Herman [Lum] and Pat [Yim]. Basically Barry was the push and Pat, the student. But Herman was the boss. (Chuckles) So what we had to do was—I had written the program. Okay, give me the worst kids you've got. Give me the kid that you feel has absolutely no chance in the world of changing his behavior under nineteen. Give me those kids. Put 'em in our program, and we'll put 'em under strict—we'll use GGI [guided group interaction] as the treatment mode. Of course we'll have to send somebody to get trained in GGI. A lot of people, to this day, still don't like GGI because it's so harsh. Then let me write the program, totally behavior mod[ification]. The contract is that you can get out of Ko'olau and come in this program. Issue is that you have to obey every one of the program's rules. If you don't, you will go immediately back to Ko'olau and serve till your minority, okay? To your majority. That could mean breaking any of the rules. The way our rules went was come, be on time, eat breakfast, go to learning center—do just like the football kids—do your program that's prescribed for you at 90 percent correct, come down eat lunch, go to group in the afternoon.

Then they gotta deal with GGI, which deals with the total here and now, only the here and now. Issue is if you're a car thief and you're in there for stealing cars, we don't want to hear about the fact that your mother was a prostitute and you don't know who your father was and you didn't have a clean place to sleep last night. The group turns on the fact that it truly doesn't matter. Did you steal the car? And don't tell me your sad stories. See we had all been trained to listen to the sad stories. So I knew it was key to get the leaders, 'cause I watched at

Boys' Republic. Then we went to Divisadero Street in San Francisco where the guru was, and really, the program was refined there. I asked Ken Ling to go get trained, 'cause I saw Ken as somebody with enormous potential. Enormous potential. And he did. Then I sent Wayne Matsuo. And who else? Ernest Lee. And that was it. Of those people, Ken was—well, Wayne was good, but Wayne was not nearly as good as Kenneth. Kenneth took to it like a duck to water. But it was terribly draining, because it means you put yourself in there in the same light. You have to keep focusing the group back. It's only the group that makes decisions.

So if you come to group—and then you have to say what you did the day before. But these guys all know, 'cause they all travel in the same group. So if it says that you got drunk last night, it's best if you say, "Oh, last night I got whacked." Then they deal with that. Then whatever the group says you're supposed to do, you're supposed to do. Like one time it was somebody stealing nickels from the pinball machine. He didn't get caught, but his peers nailed him. So the issue was he had to take the money back, on top of that and then he had to do work at Pālama which entailed moving a whole bunch of dirt that they had, they were going to fill in a field. Shoveling over that whole big field. Not just the guy had to do it, the whole group has to pay the sin, too, see? So at that time, I talked to one of the kids who was shoveling, and kind of a ringleader. I think he tried to burn Salvation Army home down twice and tried to kill one of their employees. But, he's one of my shining lights (chuckles), but anyway. He was out there shoveling, he wasn't an athletic kid, but he was kind of slick, right? Well, he was only fourteen. When he went before Judge Rubin when he came into the program—they have to go through court to be sent to our program, right? Then they go back through court to get out, either successfully or not. When Judge Rubin asked Kelly, "Well, what do you want to do? What do you want to be, Kelly?"

He says, "I want to be one thief." (Chuckles)

And Barry says, "Well, you're not a very good one."

So this kid was out there, and he was shoveling and sweating, and I said to him, "Oh, you know, so-and-so's your friend, right?" The guy that did it.

"Oh, I don't like the fucker, I hate that fucker. (Laughs) I don't like him at all." And it was funny because it showed me there was a distinction. It isn't "I'm not doing this because you're my friend." [It's] "I'm doing it because you're part of the group and you brought shame on us, and I might get my tail sent back." 'Cause the story was if one failed, it gets really fucked up, the whole group will go back. So everybody's future hung on everybody else. It is still a marvelous treatment mode. Because it takes so much commitment out of the person to this group. And if you don't do it, they won't do it. That's for sure, right? And you can't come on with, "I'm the boss, so I'm gonna tell you." Nothing like that. It all has to be out of the group, up. We had tremendous results with this program. Of course, it couldn't be made public, because if the public had any idea that kids who were sent over there for murder or rape or double arson or whatever were outside paddling around on the streets, they would have had a conniption fit.

Well, when we reported this to the National Psychological Association, a couple of people came up to me and said, "Well, I don't believe you can do it, because it's against the law." Well, it was against the law.



And I said, "We did it because the judge of our family courts said, 'Do it.'" We don't make the laws. (Chuckles) And we don't break the laws. If the court says, "Make a program, do it," we do it.

Well, of course, then it came under fire from within. Violating their rights. Oh, it violated their rights ten times over. That you could go back and have to spend four more years in jail because you were tardy, or because you didn't do your academic work right or whatever. Yeah, it did, technically it did. But from the principle of the program, it was effective. The fact is, sometimes this rights-counterrights thing—and I'm not for cruelty at all—but it can balance to the point nothing happens. Where the person gets nothing from it. Then they learn to distrust everything. They learn to distrust the system, 'cause they think they're smarter than it is. And they are. And they learn to distrust workers 'cause they think they're dumb, which we are. So anyway, that program was a model. People came [from] all over. The only thing that people in other states couldn't put together was the judiciary. 'Cause there wasn't any other judge—and I've gone to meetings, judicial meetings on the Mainland while the program was in, and where Judge Lum would speak, or Barry would speak. The other judges would want to, and they'd talk—"Oh, I wish I could do something like this." But they didn't. I heard recently by watching television some judge down in Florida was doing exactly the same thing.

MK: This program---I know that originally this trip, the blue-ribbon trip, was federally funded. How 'bout the program itself that came out of that?

EP: Family court, family court, totally. They said it was cheaper than keeping them locked up. Which it was, a lot cheaper. The thing is, a lot of these kids had kids. These young guys had babies. So taking them and saying, "You can go home and live with your old lady and your baby," this is really great. If their significant other is an in law person, rather than an out law person, it was extremely helpful. In fact, at one time I said, "I know how we can get all the kids straight." In fact, I told this to Wayne Matsuo, and I've heard him quote it, too. "Give me the kid when he's fifteen years old who is, quote, juvenile delinquent. A roaring gangster." The reason these people had to be gangsters is that they had to have no relationship with an authoritative adult that was positive. No teacher, no policeman friend, no counselor, they didn't like it. The only people they respected were their peers. And they were gangs, but they weren't [called] gangs then, but that was what it was. If you have another kind of person who has other kinds of loyalties, it breaks the importance of this power. Because the kids go to each other for reward, for affection, for discipline, the whole thing. So, in selecting them, they had to be gangsters. We ran 'em through the profile. Loners and things don't do well in that kind of a program at all, 'cause it means nothing to them, yeah?

On the Mainland when the judges would say, "Well, how do you get. . . .," Judge Lum said, "Well, it's my district, you know. And if you want to argue with it, come to me. I'll take it. I mean whatever the charges are, bring them to me. It's not the program." He didn't even include his intermediary judges. When a kid goofed up, they went back into court. The whole group had to go, and there were max[imum] ten, minimum seven. We all had to go. Then the judge did his thing. And Barry did these tremendous things. I mean, Barry was big and he would loom up in his black dress looking like the black angel out of somewhere and his big bass booming voice. Boom, boom, boom, right? (Laughs) So they would go back, and he would shame the entire group, and they all had to do penance work.

But on graduation, when after the group felt that the guy was not going to bullshit anybody



anymore and was gonna take charge and not break the law—that's the only thing we required. Don't break the law. We're not telling you how to cut your hair, nothing. Break the law, and you've had it. When they decided the guy learned his lesson and was not going to break the law, you go back to court. In the meantime, when they had gotten to that point, we'd made plans for them.

Like with Kelly, although he was underaged when he got out—he was only seventeen—Walter Kupau [Carpenters Union Local 745 leader] was one of our best benefactors. Walter gave money to the settlement. Walter had the union members come down and man the gym and stuff during the time the city cut off the funds. You could always count on him. Individually, you could always count on him. 'Cause Walter knew what it was like to be on the other side. So I went to him and I said, "Walter, can you get this boy in your apprentice program? He's really smart, and he's a tough little nut, but he isn't going to mess up." Walter says only one trouble, he isn't eighteen. From the youth employment thing and from insurance stuff, gotta be eighteen. I says, "We've gotta have something to connect him with. I'm not gonna let this go down the drain (laugh) for nothing."

Anyway, Walter did another one of his fine steps around a couple of months and got him in the program when he was still seventeen, maintained him over at the community college taking double courses until his birthday, then he can go out on a job, see? But you have to have people willing to be logical and to care about it. Now he didn't put the kid on the job site a day before he was eighteen. But on the other hand, he didn't say, "No, we can't take you in the program. Come back when you're eighteen." So the program was really good. The people, the workers, who went through the program have all risen to high places. (Laughs)

MK: And then how long did that program last?

EP: Oh, I don't know. Let's see, five, six years. Five or six years.

MK: So you had the Pākōlea football program, you had this program . . .

EP: In-community treatment. Uh huh.

MK: What other programs did you have after that?

EP: Oh, the court came to me and said that the feds are going to take away our money because we keep the non-law violating status offenders and the law abiding together at detention home. And they did. Like the girl runaways, and they were almost all runaways—that we didn't have much in town to do with these. To be honest, I didn't have anything for 'em, and when people would say, "But you don't have anything for the girls," I'd say, "That's right, I don't."

And they'd say, "Well, but that's wrong."

I said, "No, it's not. I don't work well with girls. I don't understand their needs and I don't understand them, okay. Somebody in this community understands them and knows their needs. I understand young men. Yeah, I do, okay?" So we got a lot of knocks for not having for girls. But when the court came and said they were gonna lose their money, and we had this building—I lived in this one building, and there was this other building that also had an apartment upstairs over the kitchen. So we said let's turn it into a residence and make a

residential place for the girls. So, okay, I named that Corbett House after Judge [Gerald] Corbett, anyway. So we did, I wrote that program. It's been in and out of existence, but it's back in existence.

I wrote another program that I really, really loved. It had—another residential program—had to do, that I didn't notice—Hawaiian boys had needs, I felt, different from the other boys. And so I wrote a program for Hawaiian boys who were in the court, who didn't have—either they were orphans or they had been removed from their home because it was not a healthy place to be. But they were Hawaiian. And so I wrote *Kaulana Hānau Hou*, being born famous again. Eddie Kainoa ran it. It ran totally on Hawaiian principles. The boys lived together, they lived together as an 'ohana. What we really wanted was for them to be able to grow their own food and really work as an 'ohana. So I began the program on the Big Island. But we got chased out of the Big Island, because [state senator] Nelson Doi said O'ahu is sending their bad apples over into the Big Island. (Laughs) Well, so then, "Where will we go?"

So Herman says, "Olinda Prison is empty, and it's state property, it's not Maui [County] property. So we'll move to Olinda." So we went to Olinda. The superintendent's home is what we used, then. That went on good for two years. Then Annie—bless her heart, my dear, wonderful Annie—got into a terrible confrontation with Elmer Carvalho, who was the mayor of Maui [County]. (Laughs)

MK: And this Annie, what was her last name?

EP: Well, she's Kainoa.

MK: Oh, okay.

EP: One big Hawaiian lady; (chuckles) who could raise children—she had been foster parent to so many—kids just came to her and thrived. I mean, some people raised flowers. Annie raised kids. And so when I saw this, I said we got to put it to better use. She had been a group home leader for Child and Family Services, all over. So the Hawaiian issues of the 'ohana—using *ho'oponopono* as a total means, their physical activities had to do with in the Hawaiian way, and living as closely as they could to basic Hawaiian philosophy of *aloha 'āina, mālama 'āina*. Anyhow, what they did is they lived with Annie. . . . Oh, anyway, by that time we got kicked out of Maui, so then we had to come here [O'ahu]. So the kids were given the idea that you can go [family] court and wait for another assignment, or you can go to detention home and wait till we can find a place for the program. All of the kids chose to wait for another program. Of course, we're only talking here about seven, maximum nine.

Well, our boss [Pālama Settlement executive director] at that time was Bobby [Robert] Higashino. Bobby Higashino's wife, Nani, owned property in Kapahulu. At that time, Joe, my husband, he's a carpenter, and he was working for on those homes out in Pearl City. And you know they're prefab[ricated] and they were like double townhouses, right? So they had finished that whole thing up, and they were told that there were some couple or three left that could be bought. So Nani and Bob bought the house and had it—and you know, it was prefab—and had it moved over to Kapahulu. (Chuckles) And now, then, they were city dwellers, right? So that took one arm of the program kind of away. Annie had a home, a homestead, out in Nānākuli. Well, she would take the kids on weekends out to her little Nānākuli house and they'd live out there. They'd still do the farm stuff and the ocean

stuff—the pick *limu* and fish. So that was all family-court funded.

MK: And how did that program work out?

EP: Well, that program worked out really good, but we ran into trouble with the ACLU [American Civil Liberties Union] and the feds. We said it was for Hawaiians. I justified that by the fact that Hawaiians represent the largest single group that turn up in jail and dead and on welfare and so forth. So they're the most singularly deprived, right? So we had to open it up and say anybody. But then the court knew who we were looking for. But see, to fit in that program, you have to really believe and feel the way Hawaiians feel. And not all of us do that, 'cause it isn't in our nature. So we took outside kids, took couple of [African American] kids, took chop suey Chicano I-don't-know-what. Samoans didn't work out.

So anyway, but that program, federal funding ran out. The court was getting the money from the feds, you know, for it. It ran out, and then I guess that was how it ended. It ended after I left. But I stayed in touch. You know, Annie wanted to stay in touch with them. But that was a good program. Right now, you'll hear people talking about doing the same things, going over to the Big Island, for example, and taking the kids there to teach them to belong to something, to teach them to believe in something, to teach them to be proud of who they are, to teach them to know who they are, all those good things, right? It works. So that was that program.

Corbett House, Kaulana Hānau Hou, In-Community Treatment, that was it. But this was going on simultaneously with Pākōlea. So you can see the whole [Pālama Settlement] center was tremendously youth-centered.

MK: So you had a lot of programs going on.

EP: Yeah, we did.

MK: Also at that time, I think Pālama Settlement was also getting into neighborhood development.

EP: Oh, that's on the other hand. See, that was not me. Well Lorin Gill hired James Swenson and he said, "You'd rather have him working with you than his knives in your back, 'cause you're losing on that." By then I was, 'cause that isn't my bag, okay? So Jim took over neighborhood development, and what he did in neighborhood development was uniquely wonderful. I did help him in some ways—I funnelled people over there. Like I met, in New York, Preston Wilcox, who led the redevelopment of Bedford-Stuyvesant. He'd led the Columbia University riots, too. But a very dramatic man. And Barbara Johnson, that headed welfare mothers organization in New York. [EP] had Jack Nagoshi find the money (laughs) to bring them over here to talk to our people, and he did. Now Jim was head of neighborhood development at the time, so he did the principal work. I was connected because I knew the people. I took part, but I wasn't the designer or the brains of the organization. Out of that came the single most powerful—other than a labor union—grouping of people I've ever seen on this island. And that was the Welfare Rights Advisory Council. And that was Lena Rivera, and Myrtle Mokiau. But Lena was the heart, soul, and so forth. Jim worked infinitely close with her, teaching her structure, all this. You couldn't teach her what she knew about people. Then we teach her how to play the ball game. Then she developed this group that was so powerful that any time she called Governor Burns, he'd pick up the phone and answer it right away within a half hour.

She could walk into his office any time of day, anywhere. And so it was really---they had tremendous impact on changing a lot of the things about welfare that have gone back the other way now, 'cause Lena's in her grave. It lasted until Lena died. When Lena died, there wasn't a strong leadership built in, because Hawaiians don't do that. They don't build leadership from one to the other. It's not in their culture to do it that way.

But on the other hand, they're very human in this. One of the things, Lena had hired me as a consultant to come work and do leadership classes with her cabinet. She canceled it. Day after day after day, she would cancel it. Finally, one day I went in, I said, "Lena, if you change your mind about the program, that's cool. (Laughs) You know, it's okay. But let's don't play this. So if you want to, say you don't want to do it, that's fine, we'll do something else."

She says, "No, Earlene, I really want to do it."

I said, "Well, the people need to know these things."

She says, "But if I tell everything I know to them, why do they need me?"

I looked at her and I said, "You are one of the most honest ladies I have ever known in my life," because I think we all have that feeling, but none of us say it out loud. I said, "I don't know. I really don't know. I feel that they would say, 'Oh, you taught me, so you're up here.' But on the other hand, they may say, 'Hey, I can do that. The heck with you.'" And she was very ill. She was very ill. She never did finish. (Chuckles)

MK: And then this Jim Swenson, is he still around?

EP: He's in California, I believe. He never quit being a minister, see? They never made him give up his minister papers. So every time the Methodist church here would get into problems, like that Pohai Nani [Good Samaritan Kauhale]. Is that the one in Kāne'ohe?

MK: Yeah, yeah.

EP: Yeah, they got into bad financial problems and everything. They called Jim to be the person to resolve the problems. They had another problem in the church with something out in 'Āina Haina, and they called him to actively resolve that. He had always stayed as the chairman of their, I guess, finance committee.

MK: And then . . .

EP: He decided to go back to full-time church work.

MK: And when we say that he was involved in neighborhood development, what was neighborhood development?

EP: Oh, he hired workers, including Ka'iulani DeSilva—she was a student—and the girl that's [with] the Legal Aid [Society of Hawai'i], Elizabeth Fujiwara. She was a student under Jim. Oh, some really top people were. . . . And what they did is he knew all of the techniques about how do you get to grass roots, how do you organize grass roots, how do you share with grass roots the skills they need to know to do their business, and that's what he did. He was



tremendous.

He used me in another way. I went in—I don't know when was it, [19]72, I guess, or [19]73—to the University of Michigan, and took the summer school on simulations, and writing simulations and teaching through gaming and simulation—was very hot at that time. I found some wonderful games, which I dragged back. Some weren't even patented yet. One was the lobbying game. The lobbying game was from Brandeis University. We taught the lobbying game to Marilyn Bornhorst. Who else? I mean, I can name you politicians who've gone through our lobbying game. Well, I ran that game with Jim. He was the, quote, "G-O-D". I did that on purpose 'cause I'm so heretical or whatever call it. (Laughs)

Then we wrote a game called the welfare game, with [M.] Kini, who was his number one kingpin. She was disabled, had a tremendously enlarged heart and couldn't walk well. Real frail, frail woman. Big heart, strong heart, emotionally speaking. But, so, she was like the supervisor.

They went out and organized the neighborhood, taught the committee how to take their own responsibilities and go and answer their own problems and deal with authority. Excellent program, excellent program.

MK: And also you know, during the years that you worked at Pālama, there was a Model Cities program. Was there any connection between Model Cities and Pālama?

EP: Well, I think Jim had some Model Cities money. Yeah. In fact I'm sure he did.

MK: And also, you know, during the course of our discussion, I know that you worked under Mr. Nagoshi.

EP: Uh huh [yes].

MK: You worked under Mr. Gill.

EP: Uh huh [yes].

MK: Mr. Higashino.

EP: Right.

MK: And . . .

EP: That's it.

MK: I was wondering what comments do you have to share about three of these (laughs) bosses of yours?

EP: Ah. Three of these bosses. . . . I had two committed bosses to the program. Okay? And that was Lorin and Jack. Bob was a politician. He was committed to the settlement, but at a level different. Bob was more—he was very important to the settlement because the settlement needed that connection to the other—to the power people, right? Lorin and Jack weren't those



people. They weren't those people at all. In fact, they were, sometimes, getting into hot water because they did politically incorrect things. But they would say, "This is what I think" anyway, you know, whether the people wanted to hear that or not. Bobby would on the other hand would pretty well say what the guys with the power wanted him to say. He was a good boss, but he was different.

MK: And Lorin Gill you knew when he wasn't your boss.

EP: Right.

END OF SIDE ONE

SIDE TWO

MK: Okay. You know you're one of the few people that worked at Pālama Settlement for so many years. You were there for sixteen years. And I was wondering, because you've worked there for so long and because you're a professional in the field, what do you think were Pālama's contributions to the community and to people?

EP: During that time?

MK: Mm hmm [yes].

EP: I think that the neighborhood development touched the community significantly in the fact that it brought the idea of empowerment to the people, particularly the people of Mayor Wright [Homes], and the others. But the people of Mayor Wright probably were the most, you know, powerless. I think that the neighborhood development program brought the people in and gave them skills, taught them leadership, held their hands and [helped them] go through [the process] until they didn't need [to] have hands held anymore. I think it was a significant thing. If you look at Mayor Wright right now and you look at it back then and you see the difference and why the differences came. Like that fence down the middle of the road—all they did, break it down and go across. Actually because a little girl got killed there. The paint on the graffiti on the buildings, the gun carrying, and all that stuff. [Working from] inside [the community] is how it got stopped. Not from the outside coming in. Inside demanding, you know, services. So the neighborhood patrols and all that good stuff came out of neighborhood development. So I think that was significant.

I think that the youth programs were significantly important to a great many people who are now adults. I think it changed a lot of their lives. I think it enhanced a lot of their lives. I think it allowed for the kids who were then kids to believe, "Hey, maybe I can. Nobody, like me ever did this before, but now I can." I think that it was significant. I don't think it was earthshaking. I think we did make some significant breakthroughs theoretically. I think that [one of the breakthroughs was] the idea of the learning center, which everybody immediately was doing. In two years everybody was having a learning center. I think [another breakthrough was] the idea of the total person instead of treating an ailment, yeah? Don't be a paint sniffer, right? (Chuckles) And recognizing that the needs of the body and the spirit and the soul and the mind are significant precursors of behavior. I think we really did pioneer that. I think we

ran with it hard. I think we made the biggest impact because of our connection with the [family] court and with the significant people who believed that it was worth taking a shot on. And I mean believed in a big way, like with Judge [Herman] Lum and Judge [Barry] Rubin and later Judge [Patrick] Yim. All could have gotten fired for what they did. I mean if people wanted to take them out and committees come and all this kind of stuff, you know, they could have lost their careers. But they believed so strongly in what they were doing and were so committed to the youth of the state. Judge Jerry [Gerald] Corbett, who wrote this family court law, the one who was my beginning mentor (chuckles), committed to the idea—don't waste these kids. Don't waste these kids. Don't waste them so we have to take care of them forever, yeah? So, I guess that's as much as we could do with a little agency. We had big history and that gave you a lot of courage because if you think way back when, people at Palama had enough nerve to do this, this, and this, right? Well, yeah, we don't have to be in favor. We don't have to be with. . . . We very seldom were, quote, the leader of the collective group. We belonged to all the interagency things and we were really cooperative. We worked really well, but we were never like stars like the Kalihi Y[MCA]. Bobby Higashino came out of the Y, okay? And I think that was the difference because they were connected more broadly and they always got more support than we did. They always got more money than we got. Yeah? The only place that the Kalihi Y didn't get more than Pālama was from family court. Without them we wouldn't have had any improvements at all.

MK: And then, you know for yourself, what did Pālama Settlement really mean to you and your life?

EP: Oh, it was really significant. I met my husband there. (Laughs)

MK: Oh.

EP: Yeah. He [Joe Piko] was younger than me. He's fifteen years younger than me. I met him. And he was going off into the [U.S.] army. I was enchanted by this Hawaiian. But I just thought it was enchantment, yeah?

(Laughter)

EP: And so, he went off in the army. When he got back from the army in [19]72, came back from Vietnam, we got married. I still didn't know if it was gonna go, but it's now—what—twenty-four more years down the road. And, oh, that's probably---on a personal side, is [son] Bill [Chambers] and his progress with his life and his career, my meeting Joe and our marriage, and next is Pālama.

Pālama gave me a place to be. At this time I wasn't committed to anything. I was still looking for what I wanted. I had just come back from Micronesia. I knew I wanted something. I knew I wanted to work with people. I knew I didn't want to be a nurse. Being a teacher in a classroom got stale after a while because you had to be committed to the curriculum, not the kids. And so Pālama gave it to me. Just gave it to me in my hands. All the ripe things were there. Now you go find what you want. That opportunity I don't think comes to everybody.

So, I love the [Pālama Settlement] building. I fought like heck when they were going to try and tear it down. They were going to tear it down. Our board wanted to tear down the main building when they redid it.

MK: Yeah.

EP: Okay. And with the help of old people who had—old board members who had, you know, real big ties, yeah? They spent, what, \$200,000 to move the building down. (Laughs) But I love what it stood for. I feel proud and grateful for being a part of the staff of an agency that did all these things from way back, way back time, and still, when I left, was doing the same kind of thing, okay? I loved all the people I met there. The staff—great, great people.

What else?

MK: And then when you left Pālama in 1979, what did you do after that?

EP: Oh, I took a job as the deputy director at Job Corps, with a wonderful boss. Now here's one of the—I told you the two wonderful boss[es]—here's another wonderful boss. Not that Bobby wasn't, but he just wasn't my cup of tea boss. But anyway, that's why I resigned. Really. Seriously. But anyway, [EP's boss at Job Corps] had been with the Model Cities [program] when it began out at. . . . And was sent over here to train people for Model Cities and all that. He had also been sent out into the Pacific. Then had gone back and was the head of youth corrections in Monterey county. He had just retired from that and the Job Corps here was in a terrible situation 'cause they were still state-operated. They were the only one of the fifty [states] that was state-operated. The others were all out to private companies for profit. And there was big stuff going on. So Job Corps, Washington, asked [him] to come out here and straighten things up. (Chuckles) So he wanted to hire a lieutenant. So he hired me. (Chuckles)

MK: And then you were there until 1988 . . .

EP: Right.

MK: And then you went to . . .

EP: Wai'anae Coast Community Mental Health Center, Incorporated. That was because from way back when at Pālama I organized the first drug group. It was ODAC, O'ahu Drug Abuse Coalition. There was nothing at that time. There was no drug abuse agencies, but we began doing things. Only the [State of Hawai'i] Department of Health was supposedly treating. All they treated was alcoholism and all they did is nothing. And so, a place out at Wai'anae called Wai'anae Rap Center and Pālama In-Community Treatment was dealing with substance abusers and doing it in a concerted way. So we got together, Salvation Army had programs going, Habilitat [Inc. had a program]. Oh, anyway this group, and I organized them with techniques learned from neighborhood development. (Chuckles) And we became the O'ahu Drug Abuse Coalition.

Now then, at this time there was no federal money being given for drug abuse, substance abuse at all. None. Zero. The state Department of Health only treated alcoholics and they only had the dry out program, right? There became a governor's race and Frank Fasi ran for governor (chuckles). Well, "Fearless Frankie," you know, he knows how to turn a corner or two, right? He went to Washington on his own—now he's mayor of a city—and said, "We're getting none of this drug abuse money," which they weren't because the state has to put in for it, okay? "We're getting none of this drug abuse money. We aren't even applying for it and I'm representing the majority of people in the state because the majority of people in the state

live in O'ahu. And this is my *kuleana*." And so he put in a big grant to get money. Well, Governor [George] Ariyoshi didn't want to get the money. Governor Ariyoshi didn't want it because he did apply the year before and got some money and he had a guy in his office was the head of the drug stuff and anyway, there was—he got busted for drugs. (Chuckles) And the governor got terribly upset. So he didn't want to have anything more to do with drug abuse people with drug abuse, programs, nothing, *nada, nada, nada*. No. So "Fearless Frankie" goes and captures the balloon. He comes back with the money. Now it's the city, but he's not supposed to have it. It's supposed to be a central state agency that has the money. But the city's got it. Well, it was kind of funny. But anyway, we divided [it] up among ourselves. And the next year, of course, the governor couldn't stand that embarrassment, so he put in again. They still—listen to this—they still dealt with us. Russ Cook and I were co-chairs of ODAC. And Russ Cook had come out of the Waikiki Drug Center. When the legislature—we lobbied for money for our programs and when we got it, weren't incorporated, ODAC. They gave us the money, and we cut it up—this is old Hawai'i— and it went to the programs. We sat down and we cut the pie up among us ourselves, with no middle layer at all. (Laughs)

MK: And that was when . . .

EP: State money.

MK: . . . you were with the Wai'anae . . .

EP: No, no, no.

MK: Or while you were still with Pālama?

EP: This was with Pālama, right. Right. Yeah. But this is where I met and worked with Marion Metz who was the—and Billie Hagi, who were at. . . . Billie Hagi was HCAP [Hawai'i Community Action Program] out at Wai'anae. And Marion was Wai'anae Rap Center. So we became good buddies. We were all the same age, same ideas. So Billie had long wanted to kick mental health loose from the Department of Health because the people in Wai'anae, in Nānākuli, didn't use those services. They had a particular bias that the department didn't like them, looked down on them, thought they were no good, all this stuff. Whether that happened or not, who knows? But, on the other hand, hardly any, less than three hundred people in a year used the services. So Billie and her group had been, and Marion behind her, had been lobbying to get the thing. Dennis Mee Lee was the director of health. So finally he got sick and tired of having all these petitions and all these marches and all these people and all these newspaper junk, yeah? So, he says, "Okay. You guys get together and incorporate somehow and you contract with us and you run it." Included in their package is they wanted drug treatment, in their mental health package. Department of Health till this day doesn't have a drug package. There is no Department of Health treatment of drug or alcohol abuse. They contract out to private agencies, okay? That's where it all began.

So when Billie called me and said, "It happened. We're going to get it. I want you to come out here and write our drug program, run the drug program." At first, oh, I wanted to go. I mean, it's the thing I want. But, I went out and the mental health people out there was so dug in and was so medically oriented. None of my approach in the substance abuse is medically oriented. So I thought, "Don't they need something to get along, till they get established?"

So I thought and thought, but then in the meantime, Job Corps got given to that Mormon group from Utah. And I knew my days would be limited. Within three months they sent out a thing saying they were going to change the paydays and have a pay lag. The workers at Job Corps were not unionized. They said they were going to begin January 1, that meant that January 1 they only get half a pay check. Well, you know what your needs are after Christmas. I mean, you pay the bills. Right? And everybody lives only hand to mouth. I mean you can't take that, just boom like that. In fact, I wasn't sure they had a right to say you had to take it anyway. So, I set about threatening to unionize (laughs) Job Corps workers. So I knew. Well, they said they'll drop it and then do a study in a couple years. I says, "Good." That way it'll be out in the open. But I knew, hey, I was a marked one from then, I knew. Plus the fact they had pushed for things like dress code. They got upset when they came over and the kids went in to dinner and they wore *lāvalavas*. They wore top shirts. They were mostly fringed on top and pretty *lāvalavas*, right? They thought that was very, very bad and that they should wear pants and things like that. They could wear shorts but they had to wear pants. I'm gonna fight these people till the last one and I know it will work good. They can't fire me because I haven't done anything that they can fire me for. Unless they want to look at a lawsuit. But they can make my life miserable. Then I thought, you know what else they could do? They could write me right out of the whole organizational pattern so there was no job. But before they did that (chuckles) I took the . . .

MK: Wai'anae job.

EP: Yeah.

MK: And so your position at Wai'anae was . . .

EP: Director of alcohol and drug abuse programs.

MK: Uh huh [yes]. And in 1993 . . .

EP: I got hurt.

MK: You got hurt.

EP: And that's it.

MK: And retired.

EP: Yeah.

MK: I think we'll end it here, then. . .

EP: (Laughs) About time, yeah?

END OF INTERVIEW



# **Reflections of Pālama Settlement**

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